





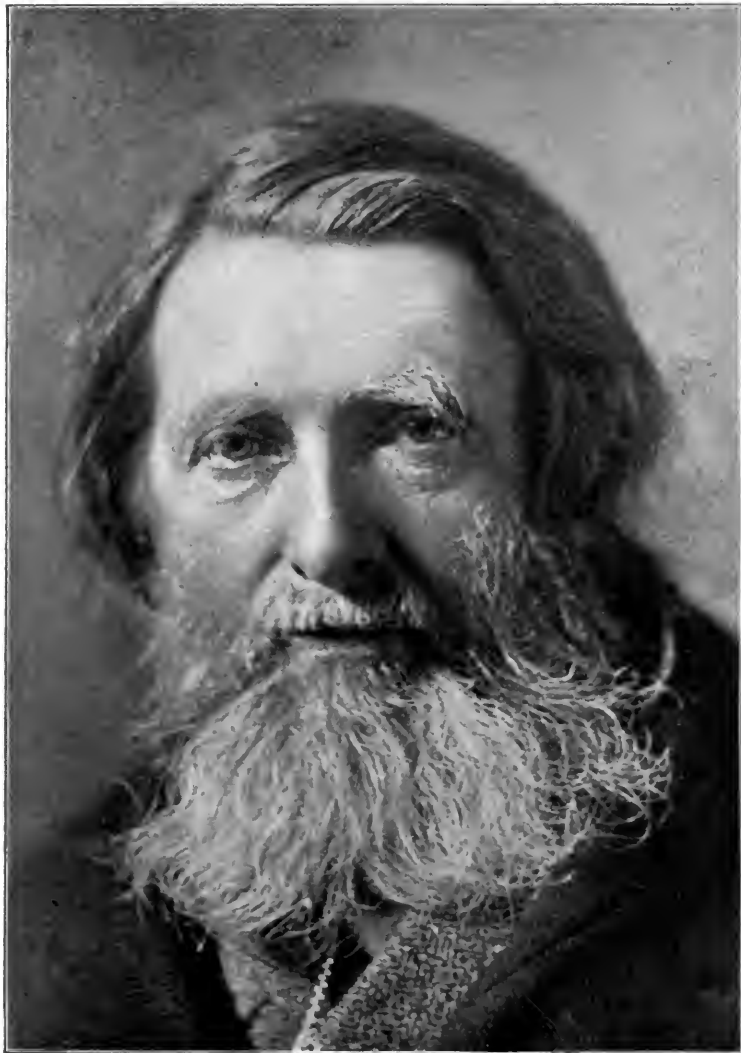
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JOHN RUSKIN.

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The Art of England.

LECTURES GIVEN IN OXFORD,

BY

JOHN RUSKIN, D.C.L., LL.D.,

HONORARY STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, AND HONORARY FELLOW OF CORPUS-CHRISTI COLLEGE,

DURING HIS

SECOND TENURE OF THE SLADE PROFESSORSHIP.

LECTURE I.

REALISTIC SCHOOLS OF PAINTING.

GEORGE ALLEN,
SUNNYSIDE, ORPINGTON, KENT.

1883.

LECTURE I.

REALISTIC SCHOOLS OF PAINTING.

D. G. Rossetti and W. Holman Hunt.

THE ART OF ENGLAND.



LECTURE I.

REALISTIC SCHOOLS OF PAINTING.

D. G. ROSSETTI AND W. HOLMAN HUNT.

I AM well assured that this audience is too kind, and too sympathetic, to wish me to enlarge on the mingled feelings of fear and thankfulness, with which I find myself once again permitted to enter on the duties in which I am conscious that before I fell short in too many ways; and in which I only have ventured to ask, and to accept, your farther trust, in the hope of being able to bring to some of their intended conclusions, things not in the nature of them, it seems to me, beyond what yet remains of an old man's energy; but, before, too eagerly begun, and too irregularly followed. And indeed I am partly under the impression,

both in gratitude and regret, that Professor Richmond's resignation, however justly motived by his wish to pursue with uninterrupted thought the career open to him in his profession, had partly also for its reason the courtesy of concession to his father's old friend; and his own feeling that while yet I was able to be of service in advancing the branches of elementary art with which I was specially acquainted, it was best that I should make the attempt on lines already opened, and with the aid of old friends. I am now alike comforted in having left you, and encouraged in return; for on all grounds it was most desirable that to the imperfect, and yet in many points new and untried code of practice which I had instituted, the foundations of higher study should have been added by Mr. Richmond, in connection with the methods of art-education recognized in the Academies of Europe. And although I have not yet been able to consult with him on the subject, I trust that no interruption of the courses of figure study, thus established,

may be involved in the completion, for what it is worth, of the system of subordinate exercises in natural history and landscape, indicated in the schools to which at present, for convenience' sake, my name is attached; but which, if they indeed deserve encouragement, will, I hope, receive it ultimately, as presenting to the beginner the first aspects of art, in the widest, because the humblest, relation to those of divinely organized and animated Nature.

The immediate task I propose to myself is to make serviceable, by all the illustration I can give them, the now unequalled collection possessed by the Oxford schools of Turner drawings and sketches, completed as it has been by the kindness of the Trustees of the National Gallery at the intercession of Prince Leopold; and furnishing the means of progress in the study of landscape such as the great painter himself only conceived the scope of toward the closing period of his life. At the opening of next term, I hope, with Mr.

Macdonald's assistance, to have drawn up a little synopsis of the elementary exercises which in my earlier books have been recommended for practice in Landscape,—a subject which, if you look back to the courses of my lectures here, you will find almost affectedly neglected, just because it was my personal province. Other matters under deliberation, till I get them either done, or determined, I have no mind to talk of; but to-day, and in the three lectures which I hope to give in the course of the summer term, I wish to render such account as is possible to me of the vivid phase into which I find our English art in general to have developed since first I knew it: and, though perhaps not without passing deprecation of some of its tendencies, to rejoice with you unqualifiedly in the honour which may most justly be rendered to the leaders, whether passed away or yet present with us, of England's Modern Painters.

I may be permitted, in the reverence of sorrow, to speak first of my much loved

friend, Gabriel Rossetti. But, in justice, no less than in the kindness due to death, I believe his name should be placed first on the list of men, within my own range of knowledge, who have raised and changed the spirit of modern Art: raised, in absolute attainment; changed, in direction of temper. Rossetti added to the before accepted systems of colour in painting, one based on the principles of manuscript illumination, which permits his design to rival the most beautiful qualities of painted glass, without losing either the mystery or the dignity of light and shade. And he was, as I believe it is now generally admitted, the chief intellectual force in the establishment of the modern romantic school in England.

Those who are acquainted with my former writings must be aware that I use the word 'romantic' always in a noble sense; meaning the habit of regarding the external and real world as a singer of Romaunts would have regarded it in the middle ages,

and as Scott, Burns, Byron, and Tennyson have regarded it in our own times. But, as Rossetti's colour was based on the former art of illumination, so his romance was based on traditions of earlier and more sacred origin than those which have inspired our highest modern romantic literature. That literature has in all cases remained strongest in dealing with contemporary fact. The genius of Tennyson is at its highest in the poems of 'Maud,' 'In Memoriam,' and the 'Northern Farmer'; but that of Rossetti, as of his greatest disciple, is seen only when on pilgrimage in Palestine.

I trust that Mr. Holman Hunt will not think that in speaking of him as Rossetti's disciple I derogate from the respect due to his own noble and determined genius. In all living schools it chanced often that the disciple is greater than his master; and it is always the first sign of a dominant and splendid intellect, that it knows of whom to learn. Rossetti's great poetical genius justified

my claiming for him total, and, I believe, earliest, originality in the sternly materialistic, though deeply reverent veracity, with which alone, of all schools of painters, this brotherhood of Englishmen has conceived the circumstances of the life of Christ. And if I had to choose one picture which represented in purity and completeness, this manner of their thought, it would be Rossetti's 'Virgin in the House of St. John.'

But when Holman Hunt, under such impressive influence, quitting virtually for ever the range of worldly subjects, to which belonged the pictures of Valentine and Sylvia, of Claudio and Isabel, and of the 'Awakening Conscience,' rose into the spiritual passion which first expressed itself in the 'Light of the World,' an instant and quite final difference was manifested between his method of conception, and that of his forerunner. To Rossetti, the Old and New Testaments were only the greatest poems he knew; and he painted scenes from them with no

more actual belief in their relation to the present life and business of men than he gave also to the *Morte d'Arthur* and the *Vita Nuova*. But to Holman Hunt, the story of the New Testament, when once his mind entirely fastened on it, became what it was to an old Puritan, or an old Catholic of true blood,—not merely a Reality, not merely the greatest of Realities, but the only Reality. So that there is nothing in the earth for him any more that does not speak of that;—there is no course of thought nor force of skill for him, but it springs from and ends in that.

So absolutely, and so involuntarily—I use the word in its noblest meaning—is this so with him, that in all subjects which fall short in the religious element, his power also is shortened, and he does those things worst which are easiest to other men.

Beyond calculation, greater, beyond comparison, happier, than Rossetti, in this sincerity, he is distinguished also from him by

a respect for physical and material truth which renders his work far more generally, far more serenely, exemplary.

The specialty of colour-method which I have signalized in Rossetti, as founded on missal painting, is in exactly that degree conventional and unreal. Its light is not the light of sunshine itself, but of sunshine diffused through coloured glass. And in object-painting he not only refused, partly through idleness, partly in the absolute want of opportunity for the study of nature involved in his choice of abode in a garret at Blackfriars,—refused, I say, the natural aid of pure landscape and sky, but wilfully perverted and lacerated his powers of conception with Chinese puzzles and Japanese monsters, until his foliage looked generally fit for nothing but a fire-screen, and his landscape distances like the furniture of a Noah's Ark from the nearest toy-shop. Whereas Holman Hunt, in the very beginning of his career, fixed his mind, as a colourist, on the true representation

of actual sunshine, of growing leafage, of living rock, of heavenly cloud; and his long and resolute exile, deeply on many grounds to be regretted both for himself and us, bound only closer to his heart the mighty forms and hues of God's earth and sky, and the mysteries of its appointed lights of the day and of the night—opening on the foam—"Of desolate seas, in—Sacred—lands forlorn."

You have, for the last ten or fifteen years, been accustomed to see among the pictures principally characteristic of the English school, a certain average number of attentive studies, both of sunshine, and the forms of lower nature, whose beauty is meant to be seen by its light. Those of Mr. Brett may be named with especial praise; and you probably will many of you remember with pleasure the study of cattle on a Highland moor in the evening, by Mr. Davis, which in last year's Academy carried us out, at the end of the first room, into sudden solitude among the hills. But we forget, in the enjoyment of these

new and healthy pleasures connected with painting, to whom we first owe them all. The apparently unimportant picture by Holman Hunt, 'The strayed Sheep,' which—painted thirty years ago—you may perhaps have seen last autumn in the rooms of the Art Society in Bond Street, at once achieved all that can ever be done in that kind: it will not be surpassed—it is little likely to be rivalled—by the best efforts of the times to come. It showed to us, for the first time in the history of art, the absolutely faithful balances of colour and shade by which actual sunshine might be transposed into a key in which the harmonies possible with material pigments should yet produce the same impressions upon the mind which were caused by the light itself.

And remember, all previous work whatever had been either subdued into narrow truth, or only by convention suggestive of the greater. Claude's sunshine is colourless, —only the golden haze of a quiet afternoon;

—so also that of Cuyp: Turner's, so bold in conventionalism that it is credible to few of you, and offensive to many. But the pure natural green and tufted gold of the herbage in the hollow of that little sea-cliff must be recognized for true merely by a minute's pause of attention. Standing long before the picture, you were soothed by it, and raised into such peace as you are intended to find in the glory and the stillness of summer, possessing all things.

I cannot say of this power of true sunshine, the least thing that I would. Often it is said to me by kindly readers, that I have taught them to see what they had not seen: and yet never—in all the many volumes of effort—have I been able to tell them my own feelings about what I myself see. You may suppose that I have been all this time trying to express my personal feelings about Nature. No; not a whit. I soon found I could not, and did not try to. All my writing is only the effort to distinguish

what is constantly, and to all men, loveable, and if they will look, lovely, from what is vile, or empty,—or, to well trained eyes and hearts, loathsome;—but you will never find me talking about what *I* feel, or what *I* think. I know that fresh air is more wholesome than fog, and that blue sky is more beautiful than black, to people happily born and bred. But you will never find, except of late, and for special reasons, effort of mine to say how I am myself oppressed or comforted by such things.

This is partly my steady principle, and partly it is incapacity. Forms of personal feeling in this kind can only be expressed in poetry; and I am not a poet, nor in any articulate manner could I the least explain to you what a deep element of life, for me, is in the sight merely of pure sunshine on a bank of living grass.

More than any pathetic music,—yet I love music,—more than any artful colour—and yet I love colour,—more than other merely material

thing visible to these old eyes, in earth or sky. It is so, I believe, with many of you also,—with many more than know it of themselves; and this picture, were it only the first that cast true sunshine on the grass, would have been in that virtue sacred: but in its deeper meaning, it is, actually, the first of Hunt's sacred paintings—the first in which, for those who can read, the substance of the conviction and the teaching of his after life is written, though not distinctly told till afterwards in the symbolic picture of 'The Scapegoat.' "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

None of you, who have the least acquaintance with the general tenor of my own teaching, will suspect in me any bias towards the doctrine of vicarious Sacrifice, as it is taught by the modern Evangelical Preacher. But the great mystery of the idea of Sacrifice itself, which has been manifested as one united and solemn instinct by all thoughtful

and affectionate races, since the wide world became peopled, is founded on the secret truth of benevolent energy which all men who have tried to gain it have learned—that you cannot save men from death but by facing it for them, nor from sin but by resisting it for them. It is, on the contrary, the favourite, and the worst falsehood of modern infidel morality, that you serve your fellow-creatures best by getting a percentage out of their pockets, and will best provide for starving multitudes by regaling yourselves. Some day or other—probably now very soon, —too probably by heavy afflictions of the State, we shall be taught that it is not so; and that all the true good and glory even of this world—not to speak of any that is to come, must be bought still, as it always has been, with our toil, and with our tears. That is the final doctrine, the inevitable one, not of Christianity only, but of all Heroic Faith and Heroic Being; and the first trial questions of a true soul to itself must always be,—Have

I a religion, have I a country, have I a love, that I am ready to die for?

That is the Doctrine of Sacrifice; the faith in which Isaac was bound, in which Iphigenia died, in which the great army of martyrs have suffered, and by which all victories in the cause of justice and happiness have been gained by the men who became more than conquerors, through Him that loved them.

And yet there is a deeper and stranger sacrifice in the system of this creation than theirs. To resolute self-denial, and to adopted and accepted suffering, the reward is in the conscience sure, and in the gradual advance and predominance of good, practically and to all men visible. But what shall we say of involuntary suffering,—the misery of the poor and the simple, the agony of the helpless and the innocent, and the perishing, as it seems, in vain, and the mother weeping for the children of whom she knows only that they are not?

I saw it lately given as one of the incontrovertible discoveries of modern science, that all our present enjoyments were only the outcome of an infinite series of pain. I do not know how far the statement fairly represented—but it announced as incapable of contradiction—this melancholy theory. If such a doctrine is indeed abroad among you, let me comfort some, at least, with its absolute denial. That in past æons, the pain suffered throughout the living universe passes calculation, is true; that it is infinite, is untrue; and that all our enjoyments are based on it, contemptibly untrue. For, on the other hand, the pleasure felt through the living universe during past ages is incalculable also, and in higher magnitudes. Our own talents, enjoyments, and prosperities, are the outcome of that happiness with its energies, not of the death that ended them. So manifestly is this so, that all men of hitherto widest reach in natural science and logical thought have been led to fix their minds only on the innume-

rable paths of pleasure, and ideals of beauty, which are traced on the scroll of creation, and are no more tempted to arraign as unjust, or even lament as unfortunate, the essential equivalent of sorrow, than in the seven-fold glories of sunrise to deprecate the mingling of shadow with its light.

This, however, though it has always been the sentiment of the healthiest natural philosophy, has never, as you well know, been the doctrine of Christianity. That religion, as it comes to us with the promise of a kingdom in which there shall be no more Death, neither sorrow nor crying, so it has always brought with it the confession of calamity to be at present in patience of mystery endured; and not by us only, but apparently for our sakes, by the lower creatures, for whom it is inconceivable that any good should be the final goal of ill. Towards these, the one lesson we have to learn is that of pity. For all human loss and pain, there is no comfort, no interpretation worth

a thought, except only in the doctrine of the Resurrection;—of which doctrine, remember, it is an immutable historical fact that all the beautiful work, and all the happy existence of mankind, hitherto, has depended on, or consisted in, the hope of it.

The picture of which I came to-day chiefly to speak, as a symbol of that doctrine, was incomplete when I saw it, and is so still; but enough was done to constitute it the most important work of Hunt's life, as yet; and if health is granted to him for its completion, it will, both in reality and in esteem, be the greatest religious painting of our time.

You know that in the most beautiful former conceptions of the Flight into Egypt, the Holy Family were always represented as watched over, and ministered to, by attendant angels. But only the safety and peace of the Divine Child and its mother are thought of. No sadness or wonder of meditation returns to the desolate homes of Bethlehem.

But in this English picture all the story of the escape, as of the flight, is told, in fulness of peace, and yet of compassion. The travel is in the dead of the night, the way unseen and unknown;—but, partly stooping from the starlight, and partly floating on the desert mirage, move, with the Holy Family the glorified souls of the Innocents. Clear in celestial light, and gathered into child-garlands of gladness, they look to the Child in whom they live, and yet, for them to die. Waters of the River of Life flow before on the sands: the Christ stretches out His arms to the nearest of them;—leaning from His mother's breast.

To how many bereaved households may not this happy vision of conquered death bring in the future, days of peace!

I do not care to speak of other virtues in this design than those of its majestic thought,—but you may well imagine for yourselves how the painter's quite separate and, in its skill, better than magical, power of giving

effects of intense light, has aided the effort of his imagination, while the passion of his subject has developed in him a swift grace of invention which for my own part I never recognized in his design till now. I can say with deliberation that none even of the most animated groups and processions of children which constitute the loveliest sculpture of the Robbias and Donatello, can more than rival the freedom and felicity of motion, or the subtlety of harmonious line, in the happy wreath of these angel-children.

Of this picture I came to-day chiefly to speak, nor will I disturb the poor impression which my words can give you of it by any immediate reference to other pictures by our leading masters. But it is not, of course, among these men of splendid and isolated imagination that you can learn the modes of regarding common and familiar nature which you must be content to be governed by—in early lessons. I count myself fortunate, in renewing my effort to systematize these, that

I can now place in the schools, or at least lend, first one and then another—some exemplary drawings by young people—youths and girls of your own age—clever ones, yes,—but not cleverer than a great many of you:—eminent only, among the young people of the present day whom I chance to know, in being extremely old-fashioned;—and,—don't be spiteful when I say so,—but really they all are, all the four of them—two lads and two lassies—quite provokingly good.

Lads, not exactly lads perhaps—one of them is already master of the works in the ducal palace at Venice; lassies, to an old man of sixty-four, who is vexed to be beaten by them in his own business—a little older, perhaps, than most of the lassies here, but still brightly young; and, mind you, not artists, but drawing in the joy of their hearts—and the builder at Venice only in his play-time—yet, I believe you will find these, and the other drawings I speak of, more helpful, and as I just said, exemplary, than any I

have yet been able to find for you; and of these, little stories are to be told, which bear much on all that I have been most earnestly trying to make you assured of, both in art and in real life.

Let me, however, before going farther, say, to relieve your minds from unhappily too well-grounded panic, that I have no intention of making my art lectures any more one-half sermons. All the pieces of theological or other grave talk which seemed to me a necessary part of my teaching here, have been already spoken, and printed; and are, I only fear at too great length, legible. Nor have I any more either strength or passion to spare in matters capable of dispute. I must in silent resignation leave all of you who are led by your fancy, or induced by the fashion of the time, to follow, without remonstrance on my part, those modes of studying organic beauty for which preparation must be made by depriving the animal under investigation first of its soul within, and secondly of its

skin without. But it chanced to-day, that the merely literal histories of the drawings which I bring with me to show you or to lend, do carry with them certain evidences of the practical force of religious feeling on the imagination, both in artists and races, such as I cannot, if I would, overlook, and such as I think you will yourselves, even those who have least sympathy with them, not without admiration recognise.

For a long time I used to say, in all my elementary books, that, except in a graceful and minor way, women could not paint or draw. I am beginning, lately, to bow myself to the much more delightful conviction that nobody else can. How this very serious change of mind was first induced in me it is, if not necessary, I hope pardonable, to delay you by telling.

When I was at Venice in 1876—it is almost the only thing that makes me now content in having gone there,—two English ladies, mother and daughter, were staying at

the same hotel, the Europa. One day the mother sent me a pretty little note asking if I would look at the young lady's drawings. On my somewhat sulky permission, a few were sent, in which I saw there was extremely right-minded and careful work, almost totally without knowledge. I sent back a request that the young lady might be allowed to come out sketching with me. I took her over into the pretty cloister of the church of La Salute, and set her, for the first time in her life, to draw a little piece of gray marble with the sun upon it, rightly. She may have had one lesson after that—she may have had two; the three, if there were three, seem to me, now, to have been only one! She seemed to learn everything the instant she was shown it—and ever so much more than she was taught. Next year she went away to Norway, on one of these frolics which are now-a-days necessary to girl-existence; and brought back a little pocket-book, which she thought nothing of, and which I begged of her: and have framed

half a dozen leaves of it (for a loan to you, only, mind,) till you have enough copied them.

Of the minute drawings themselves, I need not tell you—for you will in examining them, beyond all telling, feel, that they are exactly what we should all like to be able to do; and in the plainest and frankest manner show us how to do it—or, more modestly speaking, how, if heaven help us, it *can* be done. They can only be seen, as you see Bewick vignettes, with a magnifying glass, and they are patterns to you therefore only of pocket-book work; but what skill is more precious to a traveller than that of minute, instantaneous, and unerring record of the things that are precisely best? For in this, the vignettes upon these leaves differ, widely as the arc of heaven, from the bitter truths of Bewick. Nothing is recorded here but what is lovely and honourable: how much there is of both in the peasant life of Norway, many an English traveller has recognized; but not always looking for the cause or enduring the

conclusion, that its serene beauty, its hospitable patriotism, its peaceful courage, and its happy virtue, were dependent on facts little resembling our modern English institutions;—namely, that the Norwegian peasant “is a free man on the scanty bit of ground which he has inherited from his forefathers; that the Bible is to be found in every hut; that the schoolmaster wanders from farm to farm; that no Norwegian is confirmed who does not know how to read; and no Norwegian is allowed to marry who has not been confirmed.” I quote straightforwardly, (missing only some talk of Parliaments; but not caring otherwise how far the sentences are with my own notions, or against,) from Dr. Hartwig’s collected descriptions of the Polar world. I am not myself altogether sure of the wisdom of teaching everybody to read: but might be otherwise persuaded if here, as in Norway, every town had its public library, “while in many districts the peasants annually contribute a dollar towards a collection of books, which,

under the care of the priest, are lent out to all comers.”

I observe that the word ‘priest’ has of late become more than ever offensive to the popular English mind; and pause only to say that in whatever capacity, or authority, the essential function of a public librarian must in every decent and rational country be educational; and consist in the choosing, for the public, books authoritatively or essentially true, free from vain speculation or evil suggestion: and in noble history or cheerful fancy, to the utmost, entertaining.

One kind of periodical literature, it seems to me as I study these drawings, must at all events in Norway be beautifully forbidden,—the “*Journal des Modes.*” You will see evidence here that the bright fancying alike of maidens’ and matrons’ dress, capable of prettiest variation in its ornament, is yet ancestral in its form, and the white caps, in their daily purity, have the untroubled constancy, of the seashell and the snow.

Next to these illustrations of Norwegian economy, I have brought you a drawing of deeper and less imitable power: it is by a girl of quite peculiar gift, whose life has hitherto been spent in quiet and unassuming devotion to her art, and to its subjects. I would fain have said, an English girl, but all my prejudices have lately had the axe laid to their roots one by one,—she is an American! But for twenty years she has lived with her mother among the peasants of Tuscany—under their olive avenues in summer—receiving them, as they choose to come to chat with her, in her little room by Santa Maria Novella in Florence during winter. They come to her as their loving guide, and friend, and sister in all their work, and pleasure, and—suffering. I lean on the last word.

For those of you who have entered into the heart of modern Italy know that there is probably no more oppressed, no more afflicted order of gracious and blessed creatures—God's own poor, who have not yet received their

consolation, than the mountain peasantry of Tuscany and Romagna. What their minds are, and what their state, and what their treatment, those who do not know Italy may best learn, if they can bear the grief of learning it, from Ouida's photographic story of 'A Village Commune'; yet amidst all this, the sweetness of their natural character is undisturbed, their ancestral religious faith unshaken—their purity and simplicity of household life uncorrupted. They may perish, by our neglect or our cruelty, but they cannot be degraded. Among them, as I have told you, this American girl has lived—from her youth up, with her (now widowed) mother, who is as eagerly, and which is the chief matter, as sympathizingly benevolent as herself. The peculiar art gift of the younger lady is rooted in this sympathy, the gift of truest expression of feelings serene in their rightness; and a love of beauty—divided almost between the peasants and the flowers that live round Santa Maria del Fiore. This

power she has trained by its limitation, severe, and in my experience unexampled, to work in light and shade only, with the pure pen line: but the total strength of her intellect and fancy being concentrated in this engraver's method, it expresses of every subject what she loves best, in simplicity undebased by any accessory of minor emotion.

She has thus drawn, in faithfulest portraiture of these peasant Florentines, the loveliness of the young and the majesty of the aged: she has listened to their legends, written down their sacred songs; and illustrated, with the sanctities of mortal life, their traditions of immortality.

I have brought you only one drawing to-day; in the spring I trust you shall have many,—but this is enough, just now. It is drawn from memory only, but the fond memory which is as sure as sight—it is the last sleep from which she waked on this earth, of a young Florentine girl, who had brought heaven down to earth, as truly as

ever saint of old, while she lived, and of whom even I, who never saw her, cannot believe that she is dead. Her friend, who drew this memorial of her, wrote also the short story of her life, which I trust you will soon be able to read.

Of this, and of the rest of these drawings, I have much to say to you; but this first and last,—that they are representations of beautiful human nature, such as could only have been found among people living in the pure Christian faith—such as it was, and is, since the twelfth century; and that although, as I said, I have returned to Oxford only to teach you technical things, this truth must close the first words, as it must be the sum of all that I may be permitted to speak to you,—that the history of the art of the Greeks is the eulogy of their virtues; and the history of Art after the fall of Greece, is that of the Obedience and the Faith of Christianity.

There are two points of practical importance which I must leave under your con-

sideration. I am confirmed by Mr. Macdonald in my feeling that some kind of accurately testing examination is necessary to give consistency and efficiency to the present drawing-school. I have therefore determined to give simple certificates of merit, annually, to the students who have both passed through the required course, and at the end of three years have produced work satisfactory to Mr. Macdonald and myself. After Easter, I will at once look over such drawings as Mr. Macdonald thinks well to show me, by students who have till now complied with the rules of the school; and give certificates accordingly;—henceforward, if my health is spared, annually: and I trust that the advantage of this simple and uncompetitive examination will be felt by succeeding holders of the Slade Professorship, and in time commend itself enough to be held as a part of the examination system of the University.

Uncompetitive, always. The drawing certificate will imply no compliment, and convey

no distinction. It will mean merely that the student who obtains it knows perspective, with the scientific laws of light and colour in illustrating form, and has attained a certain proficiency in the management of the pencil.

The second point is of more importance and more difficulty.

I now see my way to making the collection of examples in the schools, quite representative of all that such a series ought to be. But there is extreme difficulty in finding any books that can be put into the hands of the home student which may supply the place of an academy. I do not mean merely as lessons in drawing, but in the formation of taste, which, when we analyse it, means of course merely the right direction of feeling.

I hope that in many English households there may be found already—I trust some day there may be found wherever there are children who can enjoy them, and especially in country village schools—the three series of

designs by Ludwig Richter, in illustration of the Lord's Prayer, of the Sunday, and of the Seasons. Perfect as types of easy line drawing, exquisite in ornamental composition, and refined to the utmost in ideal grace, they represent all that is simplest, purest, and happiest in human life, all that is most strengthening and comforting in nature and in religion. They are enough, in themselves, to show that whatever its errors, whatever its backslidings, this century of ours has in its heart understood and fostered, more than any former one, the joys of family affection, and of household piety.

For the former fairy of the woods, Richter has brought to you the angel on the threshold; for the former promises of distant Paradise, he has brought the perpetual blessing, "God be with you": amidst all the turmoil and speeding to and fro, and wandering of heart and eyes which perplex our paths, and betray our wills, he speaks to us continuous memorial of the message—"My Peace I leave with you."

The Art of England.

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BY

JOHN RUSKIN, D.C.L., LL.D.,

HONORARY STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, AND HONORARY FELLOW OF CORPUS-CHRISTI COLLEGE,

DURING HIS

SECOND TENURE OF THE SLADE PROFESSORSHIP.

LECTURE II.

MYTHIC SCHOOLS OF PAINTING.

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1883.

LECTURE II.

MYTHIC SCHOOLS OF PAINTING.

E. Burne-Jones and G. F. Watts.

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E. BURNE-JONES AND G. F. WATTS.

IT is my purpose, in the lectures I may be permitted henceforward to give in Oxford, so to arrange them as to dispense with notes in subsequent printing; and, if I am forced for shortness, or in oversight, to leave anything insufficiently explained, to complete the passage in the next following lecture, or in any one, though after an interval, which may naturally recur to the subject. Thus the printed text will always be simply what I have read, or said; and the lectures will be more closely and easily connected than if I went always on without the care of explanatory retrospect.

It may have been observed, and perhaps with question of my meaning, by some readers,

that in my last lecture I used the word “materialistic” of the method of conception common to Rossetti and Hunt, with the greater number of their scholars. I used that expression to denote their peculiar tendency to feel and illustrate the relation of spiritual creatures to the substance and conditions of the visible world; more especially, the familiar, or in a sort humiliating, accidents or employments of their earthly life;—as, for instance, in the picture I referred to, Rossetti’s Virgin in the house of St. John, the Madonna’s being drawn at the moment when she rises to trim their lamp. In many such cases, the incidents may of course have symbolical meaning, as, in the unfinished drawing by Rossetti of the Passover, which I have so long left with you, the boy Christ is watching the blood struck on the doorpost;—but the peculiar value and character of the treatment is in what I called its *material* veracity, compelling the spectator’s belief, if he have the instinct of belief in him at all, in the thing’s having verily happened;

and not being a mere poetical fancy. If the spectator, on the contrary, have no capacity of belief in him, the use of such representation is in making him detect his own incredulity, and recognize that in his former dreamy acceptance of the story, he had never really asked himself whether these things were so.

Thus, in what I believe to have been in actual time the first—though I do not claim for it the slightest lead in suggestive influence, yet the first dated example of such literal and close realization—my own endeavour in the third volume of ‘Modern Painters’ to describe the incidents preceding the charge to Peter, I have fastened on the words, “He girt his fisher’s coat about him, and did cast himself into the sea,” following them out with, “Then to Peter, all wet and shivering, staring at Christ in the *sun* ;” not in the least supposing or intending any symbolism either in the coat, or the dripping water, or the morning sunshine ; but merely and straitly striving to

put the facts before the readers' eyes as positively as if he had seen the thing come to pass on Brighton beach, and an English fisherman dash through the surf of it to the feet of his captain,—once dead, and now with the morning brightness on his face.

And you will observe farther, that this way of thinking about a thing compels, with a painter, also a certain way of painting it. I do not mean a necessarily close or minute way, but a necessarily complete, substantial, and emphatic one. The thing may be expressed with a few fierce dashes of the pencil; but it will be wholly and bodily there; it may be in the broadest and simplest terms, but nothing will be hazy or hidden, nothing clouded round, or melted away: and all that is told will be as explanatory and lucid as may be—as of a thing examined in daylight, not dreamt of in moonlight.

I must delay you a little, though perhaps tiresomely, to make myself well understood on this point; for the first celebrated pictures

of the pre-Raphaelite school having been extremely minute in finish, you might easily take minuteness for a speciality of the style,—but it is not so in the least. Minuteness I *do* somewhat claim, for a quality insisted upon by myself, and required in the work of my own pupils; it is—at least in landscape—Turnerian and Ruskinian—not pre-Raphaelite at all:—the pre-Raphaelism common to us all is in the frankness and honesty of the touch, not in its dimensions.

I think I may, once for all, explain this to you, and convince you of it, by asking you, when you next go up to London, to look at a sketch by Vandyke in the National Gallery, No. 680, purporting to represent this very scene I have been speaking of,—the miraculous draught of fishes. It is one of the too numerous brown sketches in the manner of the Flemish School, which seem to me always rather done for the sake of wiping the brush clean than of painting anything. There is no colour in it, and no light and

shade;—but a certain quantity of bitumen is rubbed about so as to slip more or less greasily into the shape of figures; and one of St. John's (or St. James's) legs is suddenly terminated by a wriggle of white across it, to signify that he is standing in the sea. Now that was the kind of work of the Dutch School, which I spent so many pages in vituperating throughout the first volume of 'Modern Painters'—pages, seemingly, vain to this day; for still, the brown daubs are hung in the best rooms of the National Gallery, and the loveliest Turner drawings are nailed to the wall of its cellar,—and might as well be buried at Pompeii for any use they are to the British public;—but, vain or effectless as the said chapters may be, they are altogether true in that firm statement, that these brown flourishes of the Dutch brush are by men who lived, virtually, the gentle, at court,—the simple, in the pothouse; and could indeed paint, according to their habitation, a nobleman or a boor, but were not only incapable of conceiving,

but wholly unwishful to conceive, anything, natural or supernatural, beyond the precincts of the Presence and the tavern. So that they especially failed in giving the life and beauty of little things in lower nature; and if, by good hap, they may sometimes more or less succeed in painting St. Peter the Fisher's face, never by any chance realize for you the green wave dashing over his feet.

Now, therefore, understand of the opposite so called 'Pre-Raphaelite,' and, much more, pre-Rubensite, society, that its primary virtue is the trying to conceive things as they are, and thinking and feeling them quite out:—believing joyfully if we may, doubting bravely, if we must,—but never mystifying, or shrinking from, or choosing for argument's sake, this or that fact; but giving every fact its own full power, and every incident and accessory its own true place,—so that, still keeping to our illustrations from Brighton or Yarmouth beach, in that most noble picture by Millais which probably

most of you saw last autumn in London, the 'Caller Herrin',—picture which, as a piece of art, I should myself put highest of all yet produced by the Pre-Raphaelite school;—in that most noble picture, I say, the herrings were painted just as well as the girl, and the master was not the least afraid that, for all he could do to them, you would look at the herrings first.

Now then, I think I have got the manner of Pre-Raphaelite 'Realization'—'Verification'—'Materialization'—or whatever else you choose to call it, positively enough asserted and defined: and hence you will see that it follows, as a necessary consequence, that Pre-Raphaelite subjects must usually be of real persons in a solid world—not of personifications in a vaporescent one.

The persons may be spiritual, but they are individual,—St. George, himself, not the vague idea of Fortitude; St. Cecily herself, not the mere power of music. And, although spiritual, there is no attempt whatever made

by this school to indicate their immortal nature by any evanescence or obscurity of aspect. All transparent ghosts and unoutlined spectra are the work of failing imagination,—rest you sure of that. Botticelli indeed paints the Favonian breeze transparent, but never the angel Gabriel; and in the picture I was telling you of in last lecture,—if there *be* a fault which may jar for a moment on your feelings when you first see it, I am afraid it will be that the souls of the Innocents are a little too chubby, and one or two of them, I should say, just a dimple too fat.

And here I must branch for a moment from the direct course of my subject, to answer another question which may by this time have occurred to some of my hearers, how, if this school be so obstinately realistic, it can also be characterized as romantic.

When we have concluded our review of the present state of English art, we will collect the general evidence of its romance; meantime, I will say only this much, for you

to think out at your leisure, that romance does not consist in the manner of representing or relating things, but in the kind of passions appealed to by the things related. The three romantic passions are those by which you are told, in Wordsworth's aphoristic line, that the life of the soul is fed.

“We live by Admiration, Hope, and Love.” Admiration, meaning primarily all the forms of Hero Worship, and secondarily, the kind of feeling towards the beauty of nature, which I have attempted too feebly to analyze in the second volume of ‘Modern Painters’;—Hope, meaning primarily the habit of mind in which we take present pain for the sake of future pleasure, and expanding into the hope of another world;—and Love, meaning of course whatever is happiest or noblest in the life either of that world or this.

Indicating, thus briefly, what, though not always consciously, we mean by Romance, I proceed with our present subject of enquiry, from which I branched at the point where it

had been observed that the realistic school could only develop its complete force in representing persons, and could not happily rest in personifications. Nevertheless, we find one of the artists whose close friendship with Rossetti, and fellowship with other members of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, have more or less identified his work with theirs, yet differing from them all diametrically in this, that his essential gift and habit of thought is *in* personification, and that,—for sharp and brief instance, had both Rossetti and he been set to illustrate the first chapter of Genesis, Rossetti would have painted either Adam or Eve—but Edward Burne-Jones, a Day of Creation.

And in this gift, he becomes a painter, neither of Divine History, nor of Divine Natural History, but of Mythology, accepted as such, and understood by its symbolic figures to represent only general truths, or abstract ideas.

And here I must at once pray you, as I have

prayed you to remove all associations of falsehood from the word romance, so also to clear them out of your faith, when you begin the study of mythology. Never confuse a Myth with a Lie,—nay, you must even be cautious how far you even permit it to be called a fable. Take the frequentest and simplest of myths for instance—that of Fortune and her wheel. Enid does not herself conceive, or in the least intend the hearers of her song to conceive, that there stands anywhere in the universe a real woman, turning an adamantine wheel whose revolutions have power over human destiny. She means only to assert, under that image, more clearly the law of Heaven's continual dealing with man,—“He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek.”

But in the imagined symbol, or rather let me say, the visiting and visible dream, of this law, other ideas variously conducive to its clearness are gathered; — those of gradual and irresistible motion of rise and fall,—the *tide* of

Fortune, as distinguished from instant change or catastrophe;—those of the connection of the fates of men with each other, the yielding and occupation of high place, the alternately appointed and inevitable humiliation:—and the fastening, in the sight of the Ruler of Destiny, of all to the mighty axle which moves only as the axle of the world. These things are told or hinted to you, in the mythic picture, not with the impertinence and the narrowness of words, nor in any order compelling a monotonous succession of thought,—but each as you choose or chance to read it, to be rested in or proceeded with, as you will.

Here then is the ground on which the Dramatic, or personal, and Mythic—or personifying, schools of our young painters, whether we find for them a general name or not, must be thought of as absolutely one—that, as the dramatic painters seek to show you the substantial truth of persons, so the mythic school seeks to teach you the spiritual truth of myths.

Truth is the vital power of the entire school, Truth its armour—Truth its war-word; and the grotesque and wild forms of imagination which, at first sight, seem to be the reaction of a desperate fancy, and a terrified faith, against the incisive scepticism of recent science, so far from being so, are a part of that science itself: they are the results of infinitely more accurate scholarship, of infinitely more detective examination, of infinitely more just and scrupulous integrity of thought, than was possible to any artist during the two preceding centuries; and exactly as the eager and sympathetic passion of the dramatic designer now assures you of the way in which an event happened, so the scholarly and sympathetic thought of the mythic designer now assures you of the meaning, in what a fable said.

Much attention has lately been paid by archæologists to what they are pleased to call the development of myths: but, for the most part, with these two erroneous ideas to begin

with—the first, that mythology is a temporary form of human folly, from which they are about in their own perfect wisdom to achieve our final deliverance; the second, that you may conclusively ascertain the nature of these much-to-be-lamented misapprehensions, by the types which early art presents of them! You will find in the first section of my ‘Queen of the Air,’ contradiction enough of the first supercilious theory;—though not with enough clearness the counter statement, that the thoughts of all the greatest and wisest men hitherto, since the world was made, have been expressed through mythology.

You may find a piece of most convincing evidence on this point by noticing that whenever, by Plato, you are extricated from the play of logic, and from the debate of points dubitable or trivial; and are to be told somewhat of his inner thought, and highest moral conviction,—that instant you are cast free in the elements of phantasy, and delighted by a beautiful myth. And I believe that every master here who is

interested, not merely in the history, but in the *substance*, of moral philosophy, will confirm me in saying that the direct maxims of the greatest sages of Greece, do not, in the sum of them, contain a code of ethics either so pure, or so practical, as that which may be gathered by the attentive interpretation of the myths of Pindar and Aristophanes.

Of the folly of the second notion above-named, held by the majority of our students of 'development' in fable,—that they can estimate the dignity of ideas by the symbols used for them, in early art; and trace the succession of thought in the human mind by the tradition of ornament in its manufactures, I have no time to-day to give any farther illustration than that long since instanced to you, the difference between the ideas conveyed by Homer's description of the shield of Achilles, (much more, Hesiod's of that of Herakles,) and the impression which we should receive from any actually contemporary Greek art. You may with confidence receive the restoration

of the Homeric shield, given by Mr. A. Murray in his history of Greek sculpture, as authoritatively representing the utmost graphic skill which could at the time have been employed in the decoration of a hero's armour. But the poet describes the rude imagery as producing the effect of reality, and might praise in the same words the sculpture of Donatello or Ghiberti. And you may rest entirely satisfied that when the surrounding realities are beautiful, the imaginations, in all distinguished human intellect, are beautiful also, and that the forms of gods and heroes were entirely noble in dream, and in contemplation, long before the clay became ductile to the hand of the potter, or the likeness of a living body possible in ivory and gold.

And herein you see with what a deeply interesting function the modern painter of mythology is invested. He is to place, at the service of former imagination, the art which it had not—and to realize for us, with a truth then impossible, the visions described

by the wisest of men as embodying their most pious thoughts and their most exalted doctrines: not indeed attempting with any literal exactitude to follow the words of the visionary, for no man can enter literally into the mind of another, neither can any great designer refuse to obey the suggestions of his own: but only bringing the resources of accomplished art to unveil the hidden splendour of old imagination; and showing us that the forms of gods and angels which appeared in fancy to the prophets and saints of antiquity, were indeed more natural and beautiful than the black and red shadows on a Greek vase, or the dogmatic outlines of a Byzantine fresco.

It should be a ground of just pride to all of us here in Oxford, that out of this University came the painter whose indefatigable scholarship and exhaustless fancy have together fitted him for this task, in a degree far distinguishing him above all contemporary European designers. It is impossible for the

general public to estimate the quantity of careful and investigatory reading, and the fine tact of literary discrimination, which are signified by the command now possessed by Mr. Burne-Jones over the entire range both of Northern and Greek mythology, or the tenderness at once, and largeness, of sympathy which have enabled him to harmonize these with the loveliest traditions of Christian legend. Hitherto, there has been adversity between the schools of classic and Christian art, only in part conquered by the most liberal-minded of artists and poets: Nicholas of Pisa accepts indeed the technical aid of antiquity, but with much loss to his Christian sentiment; Dante uses the imagery of Æschylus for the more terrible picturing of the Hell to which, in common with the theologians of his age, he condemned his instructor; but while Minos and the Furies are represented by him as still existent in Hades, there is no place in Paradise for Diana or Athena. Contrariwise, the later revival of the legends of antiquity

meant scorn of those of Christendom. It is but fifty years ago that the value of the latter was again perceived and represented to us by Lord Lindsay: and it is only within the time which may be looked back to by the greater number even of my younger auditors, that the transition of Athenian mythology, through Byzantine, into Christian, has been first felt, and then traced and proved, by the penetrative scholarship of the men belonging to this Pre-Raphaelite school, chiefly Mr. Burne-Jones and Mr. William Morris,—noble collaborateurs, of whom, may I be forgiven, in passing, for betraying to you a pretty little sacredness of their private life—that they solemnly and jovially have breakfasted together every Sunday, for many and many a year.

Thus far, then, I am able with security to allege to you the peculiar function of this greatly gifted and highly trained English painter; and with security also, the function of any noble myth, in the teaching, even of

this practical and positive British race. But now, when for purposes of direct criticism I proceed to ask farther in what manner or with what precision of art any given myth should be presented—instantly we find ourselves involved in a group of questions and difficulties which I feel to be quite beyond the proper sphere of this Professorship. So long as we have only to deal with living creatures, or solid substances, I am able to tell you—and to show—that they are to be painted under certain optical laws which prevail in our present atmosphere; and with due respect to laws of gravity and movement which cannot be evaded in our terrestrial constitution. But when we have only an idea to paint, or a symbol, I do not feel authorized to insist any longer upon these vulgar appearances, or mortal and temporal limitations. I cannot arrogantly or demonstratively define to you how the light should fall on the two sides of the nose of a Day of Creation; nor obstinately demand botanical accuracy in the graining of the wood employed for the spokes of a Wheel of

Fortune. Indeed, so far from feeling justified in any such vexatious and vulgar requirements, I am under an instinctive impression that some kind of strangeness or quaintness, or even violation of probability, would be not merely admissible, but even desirable, in the delineation of a figure intended neither to represent a body, nor a spirit, neither an animal, nor a vegetable, but only an idea, or an aphorism. Let me, however, before venturing one step forward amidst the insecure snows and cloudy wreaths of the Imagination, secure your confidence in my guidance, so far as I may gain it by the assertion of one general rule of proper safeguard; that no mystery or majesty of intention can be alleged by a painter to justify him in careless or erroneous drawing of any object—so far as he chooses to represent it at all. The more license we grant to the audacity of his conception, the more careful he should be to give us no causeless ground of complaint or offence: while, in the degree of importance and didactic value which he attaches to his

parable, will be the strictness of his duty to allow no faults, by any care avoidable, to disturb the spectator's attention, or provoke his criticism.

I cannot but to this day remember, partly with amusement, partly in vexed humiliation, the simplicity with which I brought out, one evening when the sculptor Marochetti was dining with us at Denmark Hill, some of the then but little known drawings of Rossetti, for his instruction in the beauties of Pre-Raphaelitism.

You may see with the slightest glance at the statue of Cœur de Lion, (the only really interesting piece of historical sculpture we have hitherto given to our City populace), that Marochetti was not only trained to perfectness of knowledge and perception in the structure of the human body, but had also peculiar delight in the harmonies of line which express its easy and powerful motion. Knowing a little more both of men and things now, than I did on the evening in question, I

too clearly apprehend that the violently variegated segments and angular anatomies of Sir Lancelot at the grave of King Arthur must have produced on the bronze-minded sculptor simply the effect of a Knave of Clubs and Queen of Diamonds; and that the Italian master, in his polite confession of inability to recognize the virtues of Rossetti, cannot but have greatly suspected the sincerity of his entertainer, in the profession of sympathy with his own.

No faults, then, that we can help,—this we lay down for certain law to start with; therefore, especially, no ignoble faults, of mere measurement, proportion, perspective, and the like, may be allowed to art which is by claim, learned and magistral; therefore bound to be, in terms, grammatical. And yet we are not only to allow, but even to accept gratefully, any kind of strangeness and deliberate difference from merely realistic painting, which may raise the work, not only above vulgarity, but above incredulity. For

it is often by realizing it most positively that we shall render it least credible.

For instance, in the prettiest design of the series, by Richter, illustrating the Lord's Prayer, which I asked you in my last lecture to use for household lessons;—that of the mother giving her young children their dinner in the field which their father is sowing,—one of the pieces of the enclosing arabesque represents a little winged cherub emergent from a flower, holding out a pitcher to a bee, who stoops to drink. The species of bee is not scientifically determinable; the wings of the tiny servitor terminate rather in petals than plumes; and the unpretentious jug suggests nothing of the clay of Dresden, Sevres, or Chelsea. You would not, I think, find your children understand the lesson in divinity better, or believe it more frankly, if the hymenopterous insect were painted so accurately that, (to use the old method of eulogium on painting,) you could hear it buzz; and the cherub completed into the living like-

ness of a little boy with blue eyes and red cheeks, but of the size of a humming-bird. In this and in myriads of similar cases, it is possible to imagine from an outline what a finished picture would only provoke us to deny in contempt.

Again, in my opening lecture on Light and Shade, the sixth of those given in the year 1870, I traced in some completeness the range of ideas which a Greek vase-painter was in the habit of conveying by the mere opposition of dark and light in the figures and background, with the occasional use of a modifying purple. It has always been matter of surprise to me that the Greeks rested in colours so severe, and I have in several places formerly ventured to state my conviction that their sense of colour was inferior to that of other races. Nevertheless, you will find that the conceptions of moral and physical truth which they were able with these narrow means to convey, are far loftier than the utmost that can be gathered from the iridescent delicacy

of Chinese design, or the literally imitative dexterities of Japan.

Now, in both these methods, Mr. Burne-Jones has developed their applicable powers to their highest extent. His outline is the purest and quietest that is possible to the pencil; nearly all other masters accentuate falsely, or in some places, as Richter, add shadows which are more or less conventional. But an outline by Burne-Jones is as pure as the lines of engraving on an Etruscan mirror; and I placed the series of drawings from the story of Psyche in your school as faultlessly exemplary in this kind. Whether pleasing or displeasing to your taste, they are entirely masterful; and it is only by trying to copy these or other such outlines, that you will fully feel the grandeur of action in the moving hand, tranquil and swift as a hawk's flight, and never allowing a vulgar tremor, or a momentary impulse, to impair its precision, or disturb its serenity.

Again, though Mr. Jones has a sense of

colour, in its kind, perfect, he is essentially a chiaroscurist. Diametrically opposed to Rossetti, who could conceive in colour only, he prefers subjects which can be divested of superficial attractiveness, appeal first to the intellect and the heart; and convey their lesson either through intricacies of delicate line, or in the dimness or coruscation of ominous light.

The heads of Medea and of Danae, which I placed in your schools long ago, are representative of all that you need aim at in chiaroscuro; and lately a third type of his best work, in subdued pencil light and shade, has been placed within your reach in Dr. Acland's drawing-room,—the portrait of Miss Gladstone, in which you will see the painter's best powers stimulated to their utmost, and reaching a serene depth of expression unattainable by photography, and nearly certain to be lost in finished painting.

For there is this perpetually increasing difficulty towards the completion of any work,

that the added forces of colour destroy the value of the pale and subtle tints or shades which give the nobleness to expression; so that the most powerful masters in oil painting rarely aim at expression, but only at general character—and I believe the great artist whose name I have associated with that of Burne-Jones as representing the mythic schools, Mr. G. F. Watts, has been partly restrained, and partly oppressed by the very earnestness and extent of the study through which he has sought to make his work on all sides perfect. His constant reference to the highest examples of Greek art in form, and his sensitiveness to the qualities at once of tenderness and breadth in pencil and chalk drawing, have virtually ranked him among the painters of the great Athenian days, of whom, in the sixth book of the *Laws*, Plato wrote:—"You know how the anciently accurate toil of a painter seems never to reach a term that satisfies him; but he must either farther touch, or soften the touches laid already, and never seems to reach

a point where he has not yet some power to do more, so as to make the things he has drawn more beautiful, and more apparent. *καλλίω τε και φανερώτερα.*”

Of course within the limits of this lecture there is no possibility of entering on the description of separate pictures; but I trust it may be hereafter my privilege to carry you back to the beginning of English historical art, when Mr. Watts first showed victorious powers of design in the competition for the frescoes of the Houses of Parliament—and thence to trace for you, in some completeness, the code of mythic and heroic story which these two artists, Mr. Watts and Mr. Burne-Jones, have gathered, and in the most deep sense written, for us.

To-day I have only brought with me a few designs by Mr. Burne-Jones, of a kind which may be to some extent well represented in photograph, and to which I shall have occasion to refer in subsequent lectures. They are not to be copied, but delighted in,

by those of you who care for them,—and, under Mr. Fisher's care, I shall recommend them to be kept out of the way of those who do *not*. They include the Days of Creation; three outlines from Solomon's Song; two from the Romance of the Rose; the great one of Athena inspiring Humanity; and the story of St. George and Sabra. They will be placed in a cabinet in the upper gallery, together with the new series of Turner sketches, and will by no means be intruded on your attention, but made easily accessible to your wish.

To justify this monastic treatment of them, I must say a few words, in conclusion, of the dislike which these designs, in common with those of Carpaccio, excite in the minds of most English people of a practical turn. A few words only, both because this lecture is already long enough, and besides, because the point in question is an extremely curious one, and by no means to be rightly given account of in a concluding sentence. The point is, that

in the case of ordinary painters, however peculiar their manner, people either like them, or pass them by with a merciful contempt or condemnation, calling them stupid, or weak, or foolish, but without any expression of real disgust or dislike. But in the case of painters of the mythic schools, people either greatly like them, or they dislike in a sort of frightened and angry way, as if they had been personally aggrieved. And the persons who feel this antipathy most strongly, are often extremely sensible and good, and of the kind one is extremely unwilling to offend; but either they are not fond of art at all, or else they admire, naturally, pictures from real life only, such as, to name an extremely characteristic example, those of the (I believe, Bavarian) painter Vautier, of whom I shall have much, in another place, to say in praise; but of whom, with the total school he leads, I must peremptorily assure my hearers that their manner of painting is merely part of our general modern system of scientific illustration

aided by photography, and has no claim to rank with works of creative art at all: and farther, that it is essentially illiterate, and can teach you nothing but what you can easily see without the painter's trouble. Here is, for instance, a very charming little picture of a school girl going to her class, and telling her doll to be good till she comes back;—you like it, and ought to like it, because you see the same kind of incident in your own children every day; but I should say, on the whole, you had better look at the real children than the picture. Whereas, you can't every day at home see the goddess Athena telling you yourselves to be good,—and perhaps you wouldn't altogether like to, if you could.

Without venturing on the rudeness of hinting that any such feeling underlies the English dislike of didactic art, I will pray you at once to check the habit of carelessly blaming the things that repel you in early or existing religious artists, and to observe, for

the sum of what is to be noted respecting the four of whom I have thus far ventured to speak—Mr. Rossetti, Mr. Hunt, Mr. Jones, and Mr. Watts, that they are in the most solemn sense, Hero-worshippers; and that, whatever may be their faults or shortcomings, their aim has always been the brightest and the noblest possible. The more you can admire them, and the longer you read, the more your minds and hearts will be filled with the best knowledge accessible in history, and the loftiest associations conveyable by the passionate and reverent skill, of which I have told you in the ‘Laws of Fesole,’ that “All great Art is Praise.”

The Art of England.

LECTURES GIVEN IN OXFORD,

BY

JOHN RUSKIN, D.C.L., LL.D.,

HONORARY STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, AND HONORARY FELLOW OF CORPUS-CHRISTI COLLEGE,

DURING HIS

SECOND TENURE OF THE SLADE PROFESSORSHIP.

LECTURE III.

CLASSIC SCHOOLS OF PAINTING.

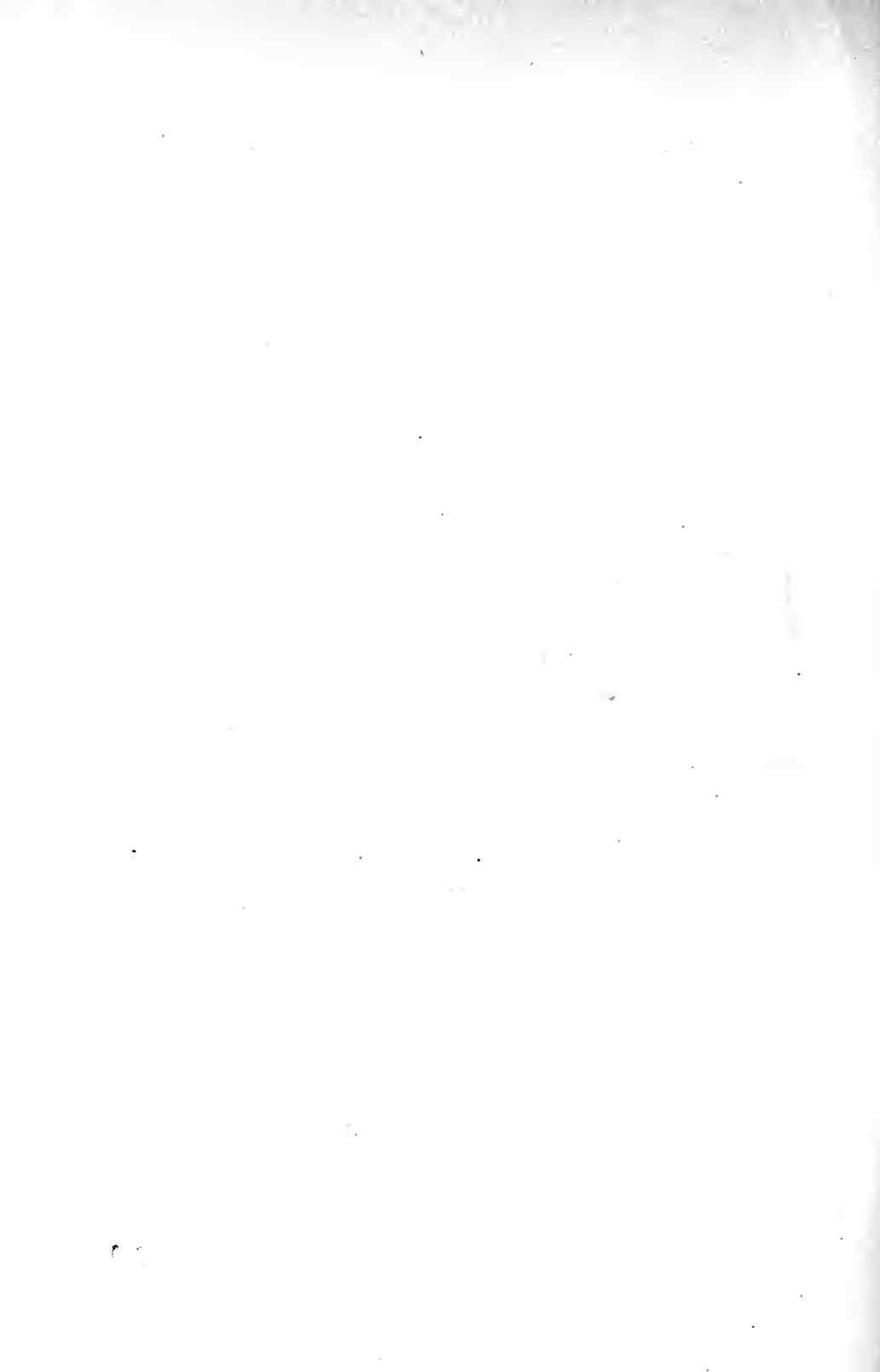
GEORGE ALLEN,
SUNNYSIDE, ORPINGTON, KENT.

1883.

LECTURE III.

CLASSIC SCHOOLS OF PAINTING.

Sir F. Leighton and Alma Tadema.



LECTURE III.

CLASSIC SCHOOLS OF PAINTING.

SIR F. LEIGHTON AND ALMA TADEMA.

I HAD originally intended this lecture to be merely the exposition, with direct reference to painting and literature, of the single line of Horace which sums the conditions of a gentleman's education, be he rich or poor, learned or unlearned :

“Est animus tibi,—sunt mores et lingua,—
fidesque,”

‘animus’ being that part of him in which he differs from an ox or an ape; ‘mores,’ the difference in him from the ‘malignum vulgus’; ‘lingua,’ eloquence, the power of expression; and ‘fides,’ fidelity, to the Master, or Mistress, or Law, that he loves. But since I came to

London and saw the exhibitions, I have thought good to address my discourse more pertinently to what must at this moment chiefly interest you in them. And I must at once, and before everything, tell you the delight given me by the quite beautiful work in portraiture, with which my brother-professor Richmond leads and crowns the general splendour of the Grosvenor Gallery. I am doubly thankful that his release from labour in Oxford has enabled him to develop his special powers so nobly, and that my own return grants me the privilege of publicly expressing to him the admiration we all must feel.

And now in this following lecture, you must please understand at once that I use the word 'classic,' first in its own sense of senatorial, academic, and authoritative; but, as a necessary consequence of that first meaning, also in the sense, more proper to our immediate subject, of Anti-Gothic; antagonist, that is to say, to the temper in which Gothic architecture was built: and not

III. Sir F. Leighton and Alma Tadema. 77

only antagonist to that form of art, but contemptuous of it; unforgiving to its faults, cold to its enthusiasms, and impatient of its absurdities. In which contempt the classic mind is certainly illiberal; and narrower than the mind of an equitable art student should be in these enlightened days:—for instance, in the British Museum, it is quite right that the British public should see the Elgin marbles to the best advantage; but not that they should be unable to see any example of the sculpture of Chartres or Wells, unless they go to the miscellaneous collection at Kensington, where Gothic saints and sinners are confounded alike among steam thrashing-machines and dynamite-proof ships of war; or to the Crystal Palace, where they are mixed up with Rimmel's perfumery.

For this hostility, in our present English schools, between the votaries of classic and Gothic art, there is no ground in past history, and no excuse in the nature of those arts themselves. Briefly, to-day, I would sum for you the statement of their historical continuity

which you will find expanded and illustrated in my former lectures.

Only observe, for the present, you must please put Oriental Art entirely out of your heads. I shall allow myself no allusion to China, Japan, India, Assyria, or Arabia: though this restraint on myself will be all the more difficult, because, only a few weeks since, I had a delightful audience of Sir Frederick Leighton beside his Arabian fountain, and beneath his Aladdin's palace glass. Yet I shall not allude, in what I say of his designs, to any points in which they may perchance have been influenced by those enchantments. Similarly there were some charming Zobeides and Cleopatras among the variegated colour fancies of Mr. Alma Tadema in the last Grosvenor; but I have nothing yet to say of *them*: it is only as a careful and learned interpreter of certain phases of Greek and Roman life, and as himself a most accomplished painter, on long-established principles, that I name him as representatively 'classic.'

III. Sir F. Leighton and Alma Tadema. 79

The summary, therefore, which I have to give you of the course of Pagan and Gothic Art must be understood as kept wholly on this side of the Bosphorus, and recognizing no farther shore beyond the Mediterranean. Thus fixing our termini, you find from the earliest times, in Greece and Italy, a multitude of artists gradually perfecting the knowledge and representation of the human body, glorified by the exercises of war. And you have, north of Greece and Italy, innumerable and incorrigibly savage nations, representing, with rude and irregular efforts, on huge stones, and ice-borne boulders, on cave-bones and forest-stocks and logs, with any manner of innocent tinting or scratching possible to them, sometimes beasts, sometimes hobgoblins—sometimes, heaven only knows what; but never attaining any skill in figure-drawing, until, whether invading or invaded, Greece and Italy teach them what a human being is like; and with that help they dream and blunder on through the centuries, achieving many fantastic and amusing

things, more especially the art of rhyming, whereby they usually express their notions of things far better than by painting. Nevertheless, in due course we get a Holbein out of them; and, in the end, for best product hitherto, Sir Joshua, and the supremely Gothic Gainsborough, whose last words we may take for a beautiful reconciliation of all schools and souls who have done their work to the best of their knowledge and conscience,—“We are all going to Heaven, and Vandyke is of the company.”

“We are all going to Heaven.” Either that is true of men and nations, or else that they are going the other way; and the question of questions for them is—not how far from heaven they are, but whether they are going to it. Whether in Gothic or Classic Art, it is not the wisdom or the barbarism that you have to estimate—not the skill nor the rudeness;—but the *tendency*. For instance, just before coming to Oxford this time, I received by happy chance from Florence the

III. Sir F. Leighton and Alma Tadema. 81

noble book just published at Monte Cassino, giving facsimiles of the Benedictine manuscripts there, between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. Out of it I have chosen these four magnificent letters to place in your schools—magnificent I call them, as pieces of Gothic writing; but they are still, you will find on close examination, extremely limited in range of imaginative subject. For these, and all the other letters of the alphabet in that central Benedictine school at the period in question, were composed of nothing else but packs of white dogs, jumping, with more contortion of themselves than has been contrived even by modern stage athletes, through any quantity of hoops. But I place these chosen examples in our series of lessons, not as patterns of dog-drawing, but as distinctly progressive Gothic art, leading infallibly forward—though the good monks had no notion how far,—to the Benedictine collie, in Landseer's 'Shepherd's Chief Mourner,' and the Benedictine bulldog, in Mr. Britton Rivière's 'Sympathy.'

On the other hand, here is an enlargement, made to about the proper scale, from a small engraving which I brought with me from Naples, of a piece of the Classic Pompeian art which has lately been so much the admiration of the æsthetic cliques of Paris and London. It purports to represent a sublimely classic cat, catching a sublimely classic chicken; and is perhaps quite as much like a cat as the white spectra of Monte Cassino are like dogs. But at a glance I can tell you,—nor will you, surely, doubt the truth of the telling,—that it is art in precipitate decadence; that no bettering or even far dragging on of its existence is possible for it;—that it is the work of a nation already in the jaws of death, and of a school which is passing away in shame.

Remember, therefore, and write it on the very tables of your heart, that you must never, when you have to judge of character in national styles, regard them in their decadence, but always in their spring and youth.

III. Sir F. Leighton and Alma Tadema. 83

Greek art is to be studied from Homeric days to those of Marathon; Gothic, from Alfred to the Black Prince in England, from Clovis to St. Louis in France; and the combination of both, which occurs first with absolute balance in the pulpit by Nicholas of Pisa in her baptistery, thenceforward up to Perugino and Sandro Botticelli. A period of decadence follows among all the nations of Europe, out of the ashes and embers of which the flame leaps again in Rubens and Vandyke; and so gradually glows and coruscates into the intermittent corona of indescribably various modern mind, of which in England you may, as I said, take Sir Joshua and Gainsborough for not only the topmost, but the hitherto total, representatives; total, that is to say, out of the range of landscape, and above that of satire and caricature. All that the rest can do partially, they can do perfectly. They do it, not only perfectly, but nationally; they are at once the greatest, and the Englishest, of all our school.

The Englishest—and observe also, *therefore* the greatest: take that for an universal, exceptionless law;—the largest soul of any country is altogether *its own*. Not the citizen of the world, but of his own city,—nay, for the best men, you may say, of his own village. Patriot always, provincial always, of his own crag or field always. A Liddesdale man, or a Tynedale; Angelico from the Rock of Fesole, or Virgil from the Mantuan marsh. You dream of National unity!—you might as well strive to melt the stars down into one nugget, and stamp them small into coin with one Cæsar's face.

What mental qualities, especially English, you find in the painted heroes and beauties of Reynolds and Gainsborough, I can only discuss with you hereafter. But what external and corporeal qualities these masters of our masters love to paint, I must ask you to-day to consider for a few moments, under Mr. Carlyle's guidance, as well as mine, and with the analysis of 'Sartor Resartus.' Take, as

III. Sir F. Leighton and Alma Tadema. 85

types of the best work ever laid on British canvas,—types which I am sure you will without demur accept,—Sir Joshua's Age of Innocence, and Mrs. Pelham feeding chickens; Gainsborough's Mrs. Graham, divinely doing nothing, and Blue Boy similarly occupied; and, finally, Reynolds' Lord Heathfield magnanimously and irrevocably locking up Gibraltar. Suppose, now, under the instigation of Mr. Carlyle and 'Sartor,' and under the counsel of Zeuxis and Parrhasius, we had it really in our power to bid Sir Joshua and Gainsborough paint all these over again, in the classic manner. Would you really insist on having her white frock taken off the Age of Innocence; on the Blue Boy's divesting himself of his blue; on—we may not dream of anything more classic—Mrs. Graham's taking the feathers out of her hat; and on Lord Heathfield's parting,—I dare not suggest, with his regimentals, but his orders of the Bath, or what else?

I own that I cannot, even myself, as I

propose the alternatives, answer absolutely as a Goth, nor without some wistful leanings towards classic principle. Nevertheless, I feel confident in your general admission that the charm of all these pictures is in great degree dependent on toilette; that the fond and graceful flatteries of each master do in no small measure consist in his management of frillings and trimmings, cuffs and collarettes; and on beautiful flingings or fastenings of investiture, which can only here and there be called a *drapery*, but insists on the perfectness of the forms it conceals, and deepens their harmony by its contradiction. And although now and then, when great ladies wish to be painted as sibyls or goddesses, Sir Joshua does his best to bethink himself of Michael Angelo, and Guido, and the Lightnings, and the Auroras, and all the rest of it,—you will, I think, admit that the culminating sweetness and rightness of him are in some little Lady So-and-so, with round hat and strong shoes; and that a final separation from the

Greek art which can be proud in a torso without a head, is achieved by the master who paints for you five little girls' heads, without ever a torso!

Thus, then, we arrive at a clearly intelligible distinction between the Gothic and Classic schools, and a clear notion also of their dependence on one another. All jesting apart,—I think you may safely take Luca della Robbia with his scholars for an exponent of their unity, to all nations. Luca is brightly Tuscan, with the dignity of a Greek; he has English simplicity, French grace, Italian devotion,—and is, I think, delightful to the truest lovers of art in all nations, and of all ranks. The Florentine Contadina rejoices to see him above her fruit-stall in the Mercato Vecchio: and, having by chance the other day a little Nativity by him on the floor of my study (one of his frequentest designs of the Infant Christ laid on the ground, and the Madonna kneeling to Him)—having it, I say, by chance on the floor, when a fashion-

able little girl with her mother came to see me, the child about three years old—though there were many pretty and glittering things about the room which might have caught her eye or her fancy, the first thing, nevertheless, my little lady does, is to totter quietly up to the white Infant Christ, and kiss it.

Taking, then, Luca, for central between Classic and Gothic in sculpture, for central art of Florence, in painting, I show you the copies made for the St. George's Guild, of the two frescoes by Sandro Botticelli, lately bought by the French Government for the Louvre. These copies, made under the direction of Mr. C. F. Murray, while the frescoes were still untouched, are of singular value now. For in their transference to canvas for carriage much violent damage was sustained by the originals; and as, even before, they were not presentable to the satisfaction of the French public, the backgrounds were filled in with black, the broken edges cut away; and, thus repainted and maimed, they are now, dis-

III. Sir F. Leighton and Alma Tadema. 89

graced and glassless, let into the wall of a stair-landing on the outside of the Louvre galleries.

You will judge for yourselves of their deservings; but for my own part I can assure you of their being quite central and classic Florentine painting, and types of the manner in which, so far as you follow the instructions given in the 'Laws of Fesole,' you will be guided to paint. Their subjects should be of special interest to us in Oxford and Cambridge, as bearing on institutions of colleges for maidens no less than bachelors. For these frescoes represent the Florentine ideal of education for maid and bachelor,—the one baptized by the Graces for her marriage, and the other brought to the tutelage of the Great Powers of Knowledge, under a great presiding Muse, whose name you must help me to interpret; and with good help, both from maid and bachelor, I hope we shall soon be able to name, and honour, all their graces and virtues rightly.

Five out of the six Sciences and Powers on her right hand and left, I know. They are, on her left—geometry, astronomy, and music; on her right—logic and rhetoric. The third, nearest her, I do not know, and will not guess. She herself bears a mighty bow, and I could give you conjectural interpretations of her, if I chose, to any extent; but will wait until I hear what you think of her yourselves. I must leave you also to discover by whom the youth is introduced to the great conclave; but observe, that, as in the frescoes of the Spanish Chapel, before he can approach that presence he has passed through the ‘Strait Gate,’ of which the bar has fallen, and the valve is thrown outwards. This portion of the fresco, on which the most important significance of the whole depended, was cut away in the French restoration.

Taking now Luca and Sandro for standards of sweet consent in the feelings of either school, falling aside from them according to

III. Sir F. Leighton and Alma Tadema. 91

their likings or knowledge, you have the two evermore adverse parties, of whom Lord Lindsay speaks, as one studying the spirit, and the other the flesh: but you will find it more simply true to say that the one studies the head, and the other the body. And I think I am almost alone among recent tutors or professors, in recommending you to study both, at their best, and neither the skull of the one, nor skeleton of the other.

I had a special lesson, leading me to this balance, when I was in Venice, in 1880. The authorities of the Academy did me the grace of taking down my two pet pictures of St. Ursula, and putting them into a quiet room for me to copy. Now in this quiet room where I was allowed to paint, there were a series of casts from the Ægina marbles, which I never had seen conveniently before; and so, on my right hand and left, I had, all day long, the best pre-Praxitelite Classic art, and the best pre-Raphaelite Gothic art: and could turn to this side, or that, in an

instant, to enjoy either;—which I could do, in each case, with my whole heart; only on this condition, that if I was to admire St. Ursula, it was necessary on the whole to be content with her face, and not to be too critical or curious about her elbows; but, in the Ægina marbles, one's principal attention had to be given to the knees and elbows, while no ardent sympathies were excited by the fixed smile upon the face.

Without pressing our northern cherubic principle to an extreme, it is really a true and extremely important consequence that all portraiture is essentially Gothic. You will find it stated—and with completely illustrative proof, in 'Aratra Pentelici,' that portraiture was the destruction of *Greek* design; certain exceptions being pointed out which I do not wish you now to be encumbered with. You may understand broadly that we Goths claim portraiture altogether for our own, and contentedly leave the classic people to round their chins by rule, and fix their smiles by

precedent: *we* like a little irregularity in feature, and a little caprice in humour—and with the condition of dramatic truth in passion, necessarily accept dramatic difference in feature.

Our English masters of portraiture must not therefore think that I have treated them with disrespect, in not naming them, in these lectures, separately from others. Portraiture is simply a necessary function of good Gothic painting, nor can any man claim pre-eminence in epic or historic art who does not first excel in that. Nevertheless, be it said in passing, that the number of excellent portraits given daily in our illustrated papers prove the skill of mere likeness-taking to be no unfrequent or particularly admirable one; and that it is to be somewhat desired that our professed portrait-painters should render their work valuable in all respects, and exemplary in its art, no less than delightful in its resemblance. The public, who are naturally in the habit of requiring rather the

felicity and swiftness of likeness than abstract excellence in painting, are always ready to forgive the impetuosity which resembles force; and the interests connected with rate of production tend also towards the encouragement of superficial execution. Whereas in a truly great school, for the reasons given in my last lecture, it may often be inevitable, and sometimes desirable, that works of high imaginative range and faculty should be slightly traced, and without minuteness finished; but there is no excuse for imperfection in a portrait, or failure of attention to its minor accessories. I have long ago given, for one instance of perfect portraiture, Holbein's George Guysen, at Berlin, quite one of the most accomplished pictures in the world; and in my last visit to Florence none of the pictures before known in the Uffizii retained their power over me so completely as a portrait of a lady in the Tribune, which is placed as a pendant to Raphael's Fornarina, and has always been

III. Sir F. Leighton and Alma Tadema. 95

attributed to Raphael, being without doubt by some earlier and more laborious master; and, by whomsoever it may be, unrivalled in European galleries for its faultless and unaffected finish.

I may be permitted in this place to express my admiration of the kind of portraiture, which without supporting its claim to public attention by the celebrity of its subjects, renders the pictures of Mr. Stacy Marks so valuable as epitomes and types of English life. No portrait of any recognized master in science could be more interesting than the gentle Professor in this year's Academy, from whom even a rebelliously superficial person like myself might be content to receive instruction in the mysteries of anatomy. Many an old traveller's remembrances were quite pathetically touched by his monumental record of the 'Three Jolly Postboys'; and that he scarcely paints for us but in play, is our own fault. Among all the endeavours in English historical paint-

ing exhibited in recent years, quite the most conscientious, vivid, and instructive, was Mr. Marks' rendering of the interview between Lord Say and Jack Cade; and its quiet sincerity was only the cause of its being passed without attention.

In turning now from these subjects of Gothic art to consider the classic ideal, though I do so in painful sense of transgressing the limits of my accurate knowledge, I do not feel entirely out of my element, because in some degree I claim even Sir Frederick Leighton as a kindred Goth. For, if you will overpass quickly in your minds what you remember of the treasures of Greek antiquity, you will find that, among them all, you can get no notion of what a Greek little girl was like. Matronly Junos, and tremendous Demeters, and Gorgonian Minervas, as many as you please; but for my own part, always speaking as a Goth, I had much rather have had some idea of the Spartan Helen dabbling with Castor and Pollux in

III. Sir F. Leighton and Alma Tadema. 97

the Eurotas,—none of them over ten years old. And it is with extreme gratitude, therefore, and unqualified admiration, that I find Sir Frederick condescending from the majesties of Olympus to the worship of these unappalling powers, which, heaven be thanked, are as brightly Anglo-Saxon as Hellenic; and painting for us, with a soft charm peculiarly his own, the witchcraft and the wonderfulness of childhood.

I have no right whatever to speak of the works of higher effort and claim, which have been the result of his acutely observant and enthusiastic study of the organism of the human body. I am indeed able to recognize his skill; but have no sympathy with the subjects that admit of its display. I am enabled, however, to show you with what integrity of application it has been gained, by his kindness in lending me for the Ruskin school two perfect early drawings, one of a lemon tree,—and another, of the same date, of a Byzantine well, which determine for you

without appeal, the question respecting necessity of delineation as the first skill of a painter. Of all our present masters, Sir Frederic Leighton delights most in softly-blended colours, and his ideal of beauty is more nearly that of Correggio than any seen since Correggio's time. But you see by what precision of terminal outline he at first restrained, and exalted, his gift of beautiful *vaghezza*.

Nor is the lesson one whit less sternly conveyed to you by the work of M. Alma Tadema, who differs from all the artists I have ever known, except John Lewis, in the gradual increase of technical accuracy, which attends and enhances together the expanding range of his dramatic invention; while every year he displays more varied and complex powers of minute draughtsmanship, more especially in architectural detail, wherein, somewhat priding myself as a specialty, I nevertheless receive continual lessons from him; except only in this one point,—that, with me, the translucency and glow of marble is the prin-

III. Sir F. Leighton and Alma Tadema. 99

cial character of its substance, while with M. Tadema it is chiefly the superficial lustre and veining which seem to attract him; and these, also, seen, not in the strength of southern sun, but in the cool twilight of luxurious chambers. With which insufficient, not to say degrading, choice of architectural colour and shade, there is a fallacy in his classic idealism, against which, while I respectfully acknowledge his scholarship and his earnestness, it is necessary that you should be gravely and conclusively warned.

I said that the Greeks studied the *body* glorified by war; but much more, remember, they studied the *mind* glorified by it. It is the *μητις Ἀχιλλῆος*, not the muscular force, which the good beauty of the body itself signifies; and you may most strictly take the Homeric words describing the aspect of Achilles showing himself on the Greek rampart as representative of the total Greek ideal. Learn by heart, unforgettably, the seven lines—

Ἀὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς ὦρτο Διὶ φίλος· ἀμφὶ δ' Ἀθήνη
 ὦμοις ἰφθίμοισι βάλ' Αἰγίδα θυσσανόεσσαν·
 Ἀμφὶ δέ οἱ κεφαλῇ νέφος ἔστεφε διὰ θεῶν
 χρύσειον, ἐκ δ' αὐτοῦ δαίε φλόγα παμφανόωσαν.
 Ἥνίοχοι δ' ἔκπληγῆν, ἐπεὶ ἴδον ἄκαματον πῦρ
 Δεινον ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς μεγαθύμου Πηλείωνος
 Δαιόμενον· τὸ δ' ἔδαιε θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη;

which are enough to remind you of the whole context, and to assure you of the association of light and cloud, in their terrible mystery, with the truth and majesty of human form, in the Greek conception; light and cloud, whether appointed either to show or to conceal, both given by a divine spirit, according to the bearing of your own university shield, "Dominus illuminatio." In all ancient heroic subjects, you will find these two ideas of light and mystery combined; and these with height of standing—the Goddess central and high in the pediment of her temple, the hero on his chariot, or the Egyptian king colossal above his captives.

Now observe, that whether of Greek or

III. *Sir F. Leighton and Alma Tadema.* 101

Roman life, M. Alma Tadema's pictures are always in twilight—interiors, ὑπο συμμυγῆ σκιᾶ. I don't know if you saw the collection of them last year at the Grosvenor, but with that universal twilight there was also universal crouching or lolling posture,—either in fear or laziness. And the most gloomy, the most crouching, the most dastardly of all these representations of classic life, was the little picture called the Pyrrhic Dance, of which the general effect was exactly like a microscopic view of a small detachment of black-beetles, in search of a dead rat.

I have named to you the Achillean splendour as primary type of Greek war; but you need only glance, in your memory, for a few instants, over the habitual expressions of all the great poets, to recognize the magnificence of light, terrible or hopeful; the radiance of armour, over all the field of battle, or flaming at every gate of the city; as in the blazoned heraldry of the seven against Thebes,—or beautiful, as in the golden

armour of Glaucus, down to the baser brightness for which Camilla died: remember also that the ancient Doric dance was strictly the dance of Apollo; seized again by your own mightiest poet for the chief remnant of the past in the Greece of to-day—

“ You have the Pyrrhic dance as yet;
Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?”

And *this* is just the piece of classic life which your nineteenth century fancy sets forth under its fuliginous and cantharoid disfigurement and disgrace.

I say, *your* nineteenth century fancy, for M. Alma Tadema does but represent—or rather, has haplessly got himself entangled in,—the vast vortex of recent Italian and French revolutionary rage against all that resists, or ever did resist, its licence; in a word, against all priesthood and knighthood.

The Roman state, observe, in the strength of it expresses both these; the orders of

chivalry do not rise out of the disciplining of the hordes of Tartar horsemen, but by the Christianizing of the Roman eques; and the noble priesthood of Western Christendom is not, in the heart of it, hieratic, but pontifical. And it is the last corruption of this Roman state, and its Bacchanalian phrenzy, which M. Alma Tadema seems to hold it his heavenly mission to pourtray.

I have no mind, as I told you, to darken the healthy work I hope to lead you into by any frequent reference to antagonist influences. But it is absolutely necessary for me to-day to distinguish, once for all, what it is above everything your duty, as scholars in Oxford, to know and love—the perpetual laws of classic literature and art, the laws of the Muses, from what has of late again infected the schools of Europe under the pretence of classic study, being indeed only the continuing poison of the Renaissance, and ruled, not by the choir of the Muses, but by the spawn of the Python. And this I have

been long-minded to do; but am only now enabled to do completely and clearly, and beyond your doubt, by having obtained for you the evidence, unmistakable, of what remains classic from the ancient life of Italy — the ancient Etruscan life, down to this day; which is the perfection of humility, modesty, and serviceableness, as opposed to the character which remains in my mind as the total impression of the Academy and Grosvenor,— that the young people of this day desire to be painted first as proud, saying, How grand I am; next as immodest, saying, How beautiful I am; lastly as idle, saying, I am able to pay for flunkeys, and never did a stroke of work in my life.

Since the day of the opening of the great Manchester exhibition in 1851, every Englishman, desiring to express interest in the arts, considers it his duty to assert with Keats, that a thing of beauty is a *joy* for ever. I do not know in what sense the saying was understood by the Manchester

school. But this I know, that what joy may remain still for you and for your children—in the fields, the homes, and the churches of England—you must win by otherwise reading the fallacious line. A beautiful thing may exist but for a moment, as a reality;—it exists for ever as a testimony. To the law and to the witness of it the nations must appeal, “in secula seculorum”; and in very deed and very truth, a thing of beauty is a *law* for ever.

That is the true meaning of classic art and of classic literature;—not the license of pleasure, but the law of goodness; and if, of the two words, *καλὸς κ'ἀγαθός*, one can be left unspoken, as implied by the other, it is the first, not the last. It is written that the Creator of all things beheld them—not in that they were beautiful, but in that they were good.

This law of beauty may be one, for aught we know, fulfilling itself more perfectly as the years roll on; but at least it

is one from which no jot shall pass. The beauty of Greece depended on the laws of Lycurgus; the beauty of Rome, on those of Numa; our own, on the laws of Christ. On all the beautiful features of men and women, throughout the ages, are written the solemnities and majesty of the law they knew, with the charity and meekness of their obedience; on all unbeautiful features are written either ignorance of the law, or the malice and insolence of the disobedience.

I showed you, on the occasion of my first address, a drawing of the death of a Tuscan girl,—a saint, in the full sense of that word, such as there have been, and still are, among the Christian women of all nations. I bring you to-day the portrait of a Tuscan Sibyl,—such as there have been, and still are. She herself is still living; her portrait is the first drawing illustrating the book of the legends of the peasantry of Val d'Arno, which I obtained possession of in Florence last year; of which book I will now read you

part of the preface, in which the authoress gives you the story of the life of this Etrurian Sibyl.

“Beatrice was the daughter of a stonemason at Melo, a little village of not very easy access on the mountain-side above Cutigliano; and her mother having died in Beatrice’s infancy, she became, from early childhood, the companion and assistant of her father, accompanying him to his winter labours in the Maremma, and as she grew stronger, helping him at his work by bringing him stones for the walls and bridges which he built—carrying them balanced on her head. She had no education, in the common sense of the word, never learning even the alphabet; but she had a wonderful memory, and could sing or recite long pieces of poetry. As a girl, she used in summer to follow the sheep, with her distaff at her waist, and would fill up her hours of solitude by singing such ballads as ‘The War of St. Michael and the Dragon,’ ‘The Creation of the World, and the Fall

of Man,' or, 'The History of San Pelegrino, son of Romano, King of Scotland : ' and now, in her old age, she knows nearly all the New Testament history, and much of the Old, in a poetical form. She was very beautiful then, they say; with curling black hair and wonderful inspired-looking eyes, and there must always have been a great charm in her voice and smile; so it is no great wonder that Matteo Bernardi, much older than herself, and owner of a fine farm at Pian degli Ontani, and of many cattle, chose rather to marry the shepherd girl who could sing so sweetly, than another woman whom his family liked better, and who might perhaps have brought him more increase of worldly prosperity. On Beatrice's wedding day, according to the old custom of the country, one or two poets improvised verses suitable to the occasion; and as she listened to them, suddenly she felt in herself a new power, and began to sing the poetry which was then born in her mind, and having once begun, found it impossible

III. Sir F. Leighton and Alma Tadema. 109

to stop, and kept on singing a great while, so that all were astonished, and her uncle, who was present, said—"Beatrice, you have deceived me! if I had known what you were, I would have put you in a convent." From that time forth she was the great poetess of all that part of the country; and was sent for to sing and recite at weddings, and other festivals, for many miles around: and perhaps she might have been happy, but her husband's sister, Barbara, who lived in the house, and who had not approved of the marriage, tried very wickedly to set her brother against his wife, and to some extent succeeded. He tried to stop her singing, which seemed to him a sort of madness, and at times he treated her with great unkindness; but sing she must, and sing she did, for it was what the Lord made her for, and she lived down all their dislike; her husband loved her in his old age, and Barbara, whom she nursed with motherly kindness through a long and most distressing illness, was her friend before she

died. Beatrice is still living, at a great age now, but still retaining much of her old beauty and brilliancy, and is waited on and cared for with much affection by a pretty granddaughter bearing the same name as herself."

There are just one or two points I want you to note in this biography, specially.

The girl is put, in her youth, to three kinds of noble work. She is a shepherdess, like St. Genevieve; a spinner and knitter, like Queen Bertha; chiefly and most singularly, she is put to help her father in the pontifical art of bridge-building. Gymnastic to purpose, you observe. In the last, or last but one, number of your favourite English chronicle, the proud mother says of her well-trained daughters, that there is not one who could not knock down her own father: here is a strong daughter who can *help* her father—a Grace Darling of the rivers instead of the sea.

These are the first three things to be noted of her. Next, the material of her

III. Sir F. Leighton and Alma Tadema. 111

education,—not in words, but in thoughts, and the greatest of thoughts. You continually hear that Roman Catholics are not allowed to read the Bible. Here is a little shepherdess who has it in her heart.

Next, the time of her inspiration,—at her wedding feast; as in the beginning of her Master's ministry, at Cana. Here is right honour put upon marriage; and, in spite of the efforts made to disturb her household peace, it was entirely blessed to her in her children: nor to her alone, but to us, and to myriads with us; for her second son, Angelo, is the original of the four drawings of St. Christopher which illustrate the central poem in Miss Alexander's book; and which are, to the best of my knowledge, the most beautiful renderings of the legend hitherto attained by religious imagination.

And as you dwell on these portraits of a noble Tuscan peasant, the son of a noble Christian mother,—learn this farther and final distinction between the greatest art of past

time, and that which has become possible now and in future.

The Greek, I said, pourtrayed the body and the mind of man, glorified in mortal war. But to us is given the task of holier portraiture, of the countenance and the heart of man, glorified by the peace of God.

Whether Francesca's book is to be eventually kept together or distributed I do not yet know. But if distributed, the drawings of St. Christopher must remain in Oxford, being, as I have said, the noblest statements I have ever seen of the unchangeable meaning of this Ford of ours, for all who pass it honestly, and do not contrive false traverse for themselves over a widened Magdalen Bridge. That ford, gentlemen, for ever,—know what you may,—hope what you may,—believe or deny what you may,—you have to pass bare-foot. For it is a baptism as well as a ford, and the waves of it, as the sands, are holy. Your youthful days in this place are to you the dipping of your feet in the brim of the

III. Sir F. Leighton and Alma Tadema. 113

river, which is to be manfully stemmed by you all your days; not drifted with,—nor toyed upon. Fallen leaves enough it is strewn with, of the flowers of the forest; moraine enough it bears, of the ruin of the brave. Your task is to *cross* it; your doom may be to go down with it, to the depths out of which there is no crying. Traverse it, staff in hand, and with loins girded, and with whatsoever law of Heaven you know, for your light. On the other side is the Promised Land, the Land of the Leal.

The Art of England.

LECTURES GIVEN IN OXFORD,

BY

JOHN RUSKIN, D.C.L., LL.D.,

HONORARY STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, AND HONORARY FELLOW OF CORPUS-CHRISTI COLLEGE,

DURING HIS

SECOND TENURE OF THE SLADE PROFESSORSHIP.

LECTURE IV.

FAIRY LAND.

GEORGE ALLEN,
SUNNYSIDE, ORPINGTON, KENT.

1883.

LECTURE IV.

FAIRY LAND.

Mrs. Allingham and Kate Greenaway.

LECTURE IV.

FAIRY LAND.

MRS. ALLINGHAM AND KATE GREENAWAY.

WE have hitherto been considering the uses of legendary art to grown persons, and to the most learned and powerful minds. To-day I will endeavour to note with you some of the least controvertible facts respecting its uses to children; and to obtain your consent to the main general principles on which I believe it should be offered to them.

Here, however, I enter on ground where I must guard carefully against being misled by my own predilections, and in which also the questions at issue are extremely difficult, because most of them new. It is only in recent times that pictures have become familiar means of household pleasure and education:

only in our own days—nay, even within the last ten years of those, that the means of illustration by colour-printing have been brought to perfection, and art as exquisite as we need desire to see it, placed, if our school-boards choose to have it so, within the command of every nursery governess.

Having then the colour-print, the magic-lantern, the electric-light, and the—to any row of ciphers—magnifying, lens, it becomes surely very interesting to consider what we may most wisely represent to children by means so potent, so dazzling, and, if we will, so faithful. I said just now that I must guard carefully against being misled by my own predilections, because having been myself brought up principally on fairy legends, my first impulse would be to insist upon every story we tell to a child being untrue, and every scene we paint for it, impossible. But I have been led, as often before confessed, gravely to doubt the expediency of some parts of my early training; and perhaps some day may try to

divest myself wholly, for an hour, of these dangerous recollections; and prepare a lecture for you in which I will take Mr. Gradgrind on his own terms, and consider how far, making it a rule that we exhibit nothing but facts, we could decorate our pages of history, and illuminate the slides of our lantern, in a manner still sufficiently attractive to childish taste. For indeed poor Louise and her brother, kneeling to peep under the fringes of the circus-tent, are as much in search after facts as the most scientific of us all! A circus-rider, with his hoop, is as much a fact as the planet Saturn and his ring, and exemplifies a great many more laws of motion, both moral and physical; nor are any descriptions of the Valley of Diamonds, or the Lake of the Black Islands, in the ‘Arabian Nights,’ anything like so wonderful as the scenes of California and the Rocky Mountains which you may find described in the April number of the ‘Cornhill Magazine,’ under the heading of ‘Early Spring in California’; and may see represented with

most sincere and passionate enthusiasm by the American landscape painter, Mr. Moran, in a survey lately published by the Government of the United States.

Scenes majestic as these, pourtrayed with mere and pure fidelity by such scientific means as I have referred to, would form a code of geographic instruction beyond all the former grasp of young people; and a source of entertainment,—I had nearly said, and most people who had not watched the minds of children carefully, might think,—inexhaustible. Much, indeed, I should myself hope from it, but by no means an infinitude of entertainment. For it is quite an inexorable law of this poor human nature of ours, that in the development of its healthy infancy, it is put by Heaven under the absolute necessity of using its imagination as well as its lungs and its legs;—that it is forced to develop its power of invention, as a bird its feathers of flight; that no toy you can bestow will supersede the pleasure it has in fancying something

that isn't there; and the most instructive histories you can compile for it of the wonders of the world will never conquer the interest of the tale which a clever child can tell itself, concerning the shipwreck of a rose-leaf in the shallows of a rivulet.

One of the most curious proofs of the need to children of this exercise of the inventive and believing power,—the *besoin de croire*, which precedes the *besoin d'aimer*, you will find in the way you destroy the vitality of a toy to them, by bringing it too near the imitation of life. You never find a child make a pet of a mechanical mouse that runs about the floor—of a poodle that yelps—of a tumbler who jumps upon wires. The child falls in love with a quiet thing, with an ugly one—nay, it may be, with one, to us, totally devoid of meaning. My little—ever-so-many-times-grand—cousin, Lily, took a bit of stick with a round knob at the end of it for her doll one day;—nursed it through any number of illnesses with the most tender solicitude; and,

on the deeply-important occasion of its having a new nightgown made for it, bent down her mother's head to receive the confidential and timid whisper—"Mamma, perhaps it had better have no sleeves, because, as Bibsey has no arms, she mightn't like it."

I must take notice here, but only in passing,—the subject being one to be followed out afterwards in studying more grave branches of art,—that the human mind in its full energy having thus the power of believing simply what it likes, the responsibilities and the fatalities attached to the effort of Faith are greater than those belonging to bodily deed, precisely in the degree of their voluntariness. A man can't always *do* what he likes, but he can always *fancy* what he likes; and he may be forced to do what he doesn't like, but he can't be forced to fancy what he doesn't like.

I use for the moment, the word 'to fancy' instead of 'to believe,' because the whole subject of Fidelity and Infidelity has been

made a mere mess of quarrels and blunders by our habitually forgetting that the proper power of Faith is to trust *without* evidence, not *with* evidence. You perpetually hear people say, 'I won't believe this or that unless you give me evidence of it.' Why, if you give them evidence of it, they *know* it,—they don't believe, any more. A man doesn't believe there's any danger in nitro-glycerine; at last he gets his parlour-door blown into next street. He is then better informed on the subject, but the time for belief is past.

Only, observe, I don't say that you can fancy what you like, to the degree of receiving it for truth. Heaven forbid we should have a power such as that, for it would be one of voluntary madness. But we are, in the most natural and rational health, able to foster the fancy, up to the point of influencing our feelings and character in the strongest way; and for the strength of that healthy imaginative faculty, and all the blending of the good and grace, "richiesto al vero ed al

trastullo,"* we are wholly responsible. We may cultivate it to what brightness we choose, merely by living in a quiet relation with natural objects and great and good people, past or present; and we may extinguish it to the last snuff, merely by living in town, and reading the 'Times' every morning.

"We are scarcely sufficiently conscious," says Mr. Kinglake, with his delicate precision of serenity in satire, "scarcely sufficiently conscious in England, of the great debt we owe to the *wise and watchful press which presides over the formation of our opinions*; and which brings about this splendid result, namely, that in matters of belief, the humblest of us are lifted up to the level of the most sagacious, so that really a simple Cornet in the Blues is no more likely to entertain a foolish belief about ghosts, or witchcraft, or any other supernatural topic, than the Lord High Chancellor, or the Leader of the House of Commons."

* Dante, Purg. xiv. 93.

And thus, at the present day, for the education or the extinction of the Fancy, we are absolutely left to our choice. For its occupation, not wholly so, yet in a far greater measure than we know. Mr. Wordsworth speaks of it as only impossible to “have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,” because the world is too much with us; also Mr. Kinglake, though, in another place, he calls it “a vain and heathenish longing to be fed with divine counsels from the lips of Pallas Athene,”—yet is far happier than the most scientific traveller could be in a trigonometric measurement, when he discovers that Neptune could really have seen Troy from the top of Samothrace: and I believe that we should many of us find it an extremely wholesome and useful method of treating our ordinary affairs, if before deciding, even upon very minor points of conduct admitting of prudential and conscientious debate, we were in the habit of imagining that Pallas Athene was actually in the room with us, or at least outside the

window in the form of a swallow, and permitted us, on the condition always of instant obedience, to ask her advice upon the matter.

Here ends my necessary parenthesis, with its suspicion of preachment, for which I crave pardon, and I return to my proper subject of to-day,—the art which intends to address only childish imagination, and whose object is primarily to entertain with grace.

With grace:—I insist much on this latter word. We may allow the advocates of a material philosophy to insist that every wild-wood tradition of fairies, gnomes, and sylphs should be well ploughed out of a child's mind to prepare it for the good seed of the Gospel of—*Disgrace*: but no defence can be offered for the presentation of these ideas to its mind in a form so vulgarized as to defame and pollute the masterpieces of former literature. It is perfectly easy to convince the young proselyte of science that a cobweb on the top of a thistle cannot be commanded to catch a honey-bee for him,

without introducing a dance of ungainly fairies on the site of the cabstand under the Westminster clock tower, or making the Queen of them fall in love with the sentry on guard.

With grace, then, assuredly,—and I think we may add also, with as much seriousness as an entirely fictitious subject may admit of—seeing that it touches the border of that higher world which is not fictitious. We are all perhaps too much in the habit of thinking the scenes of burlesque in the ‘*Midsummer Night’s Dream*’ exemplary of Shakespeare’s general treatment of fairy character: we should always remember that he places the most beautiful words descriptive of virgin purity which English poetry possesses, in the mouth of the Fairy King, and that to the Lord of Fancies he entrusts the praise of the conquest of Fancy,—

“In maiden meditation,—Fancy free.”

Still less should we forget the function of

household benediction, attributed to them always by happy national superstition, and summed in the closing lines of the same play,—

“With this field-dew consecrate,
Every fairy take his gait;
And each several chamber bless,
Through this palace, with sweet peace.”

With seriousness then,—but only, I repeat, such as entirely fictitious elements properly admit of. The general grace and sweetness of Scott's moorland fairy, ‘The White Lady,’ failed of appeal to the general justice of public taste, because in two places he fell into the exactly opposite errors of unbecoming jest, and too far-venturing solemnity. The ducking of the Sacristan offended even his most loving readers; but it offended them chiefly for a reason of which they were in great part unconscious, that the jest is carried out in the course of the charge with which

the fairy is too gravely entrusted, to protect, for Mary of Avenel, her mother's Bible.

It is of course impossible, in studying questions of this kind, to avoid confusion between what is fit in literature and in art; the leading principles are the same in both, but of course much may be allowed to the narrator which is impossible or forbidden to the draughtsman. And I necessarily take examples chiefly from literature, because the greatest masters of story have never disdained the playfully supernatural elements of fairy-tale, while it is extremely rare to find a good painter condescending to them,—or, I should rather say, contending with them, the task being indeed one of extreme difficulty. I believe Sir Noel Paton's pictures of the Court of Titania, and Fairy Raid, are all we possess in which the accomplished skill of painting has been devoted to fairy-subject; and my impression when I saw the former picture—the latter I grieve not yet to have seen—was that the artist intended rather to obtain

leave by the closeness of ocular distance to display the exquisite power of minute delineation, which he felt in historical painting to be inapplicable, than to arrest, either in his own mind or the spectator's, even a momentary credence in the enchantment of fairy-wand and fairy-ring.

And within the range of other art which I can call to mind, touching on the same ground, — or rather, breathing in the same air, — it seems to me a sorrowful and somewhat unaccountable law that only grotesque or terrible fancies present themselves forcibly enough, in these admittedly fabling states of the imagination, to be noted with the pencil. For instance, without rating too highly the inventive powers of the old German outline-draughtsman, Retsch, we cannot but attribute to him a very real gift of making visibly terrible such legend as that of the ballad of Leonora, and interpreting, with a wild aspect of veracity, the passages of sorcery in 'Faust.' But the drawing which I possess by his hand, of the

Genius of Poetry riding upon a swan, could not be placed in my school with any hope of deepening your impression either of the beauty of swans, or the dignity of genii.

You must, however, always carefully distinguish these states of gloomy fantasy, natural, though too often fatal, to men of real imagination,—the spectra which appear, whether they desire it or not,—to men like Orcagna, Durer, Blake, and Alfred Rethel,—and dwelt upon by them, in the hope of producing some moral impression of salutary awe by their record—as in Blake's Book of Job, in Durer's Apocalypse, in Rethel's Death the Avenger and Death the Friend,—and more nobly in his grand design of Barbarossa entering the grave of Charlemagne;—carefully, I say, you must distinguish this natural and lofty phase of visionary terror, from the coarse delight in mere pain and crisis of danger, which, in our infidel art and literature for the young, fills our books of travel with pictures of alligators swallowing children, hippopotami

upsetting canoes full of savages, bears on their hind-legs doing battle with northern navigators, avalanches burying Alpine villages, and the like, as the principal attractions of the volume; not, in the plurality of cases, without vileness of exaggeration which amounts to misleading falsehood—unless happily pushed to the point where mischief is extinguished by absurdity. In Strahan's 'Magazine for the Youth of all Ages,' for June 1879, at page 328, you will find it related, in a story proposed for instruction in scientific natural history, that "the fugitives saw an enormous elephant cross the clearing, surrounded by ten tigers, some clinging to its back, and others keeping alongside."

I may in this place, I think, best introduce—though again parenthetically—the suggestion of a healthy field for the labouring scientific fancy which remains yet unexhausted, and I believe inexhaustible,—that of the fable, expanded into narrative, which gives a true account of the life of animals, supposing them

to be endowed with human intelligence, directed to the interests of their animal life. I said just now that I had been brought up upon fairy legends, but I must gratefully include, under the general title of these, the stories in 'Evenings at Home' of The Transmigrations of Indur, The Discontented Squirrel, The Travelled Ant, The Cat and her Children, and Little Fido; and with these, one now quite lost, but which I am minded soon to reprint for my younger pupils,—The History of a Field-Mouse, which in its pretty detail is no less amusing, and much more natural, than the town and country mice of Horace and Pope,—classic, in the best sense, though these will always be.

There is the more need that some true and pure examples of fable in this kind should be put within the reach of children, because the wild efforts of weak writers to increase their incomes at Christmas, and the unscrupulous encouragement of them by competing booksellers, fill our nurseries with forms of

rubbish which are on the one side destructive of the meaning of all ancient tradition, and on the other, reckless of every really interesting truth in exact natural history. Only the other day, in examining the mixed contents of a somewhat capacious nursery bookcase, the first volume I opened was a fairy tale in which the benevolent and moral fairy drove a "matchless pair of white cockatrices." I might take up all the time yet left for this lecture in exposing to you the mingled folly and mischief in those few words;—the pandering to the first notion of vulgar children that all glory consists in driving a matchless pair of something or other,—and the implied ignorance in which only such a book could be presented to *any* children, of the most solemn of scriptural promises to them,—“the weaned child shall lay his hand on the cockatrice’ den.”

And the next book I examined was a series of stories imported from Japan,* most of

* Macmillan, 1871.

them simply sanguinary and loathsome, but one or two pretending to be zoological—as, for instance, that of the Battle of the Ape and the Crab, of which it is said in the introduction that “men should lay it up in their hearts, and teach it as a profitable lesson to their children.” In the opening of this profitable story, the crab plants a “persimmon seed in his garden” (the reader is not informed what manner of fruit the persimmon may be), and watches the growth of the tree which springs from it with great delight; being, we are told in another paragraph, “a simple-minded creature.”

I do not know whether this conception of character in the great zodiacal crustacean is supposed to be scientific or æsthetic,—but I hope that British children at the seaside are capable of inventing somewhat better stories of crabs for themselves; and if they would farther know the foreign manners of the sidelong-pacing people, let me ask them to look at the account given by Lord George Campbell, in

his 'Log Letters from the Challenger,' of his landing on the island of St. Paul, and of the manner in which the quite unsophisticated crabs of that locality succeeded first in stealing his fish-bait, and then making him lose his temper, to a degree extremely unbecoming in a British nobleman. They will not, after the perusal of that piquant—or perhaps I should rather say, pincant,—narrative, be disposed, whatever other virtues they may possess, to ascribe to the obliquitous nation that of simplicity of mind.

I have no time to dwell longer on the existing fallacies in the representation either of the fairy or the animal kingdoms. I must pass to the happier duty of returning thanks for the truth with which our living painters have drawn for us the lovely dynasty of little creatures, about whose reality there can be no doubt; and who are at once the most powerful of fairies, and the most amusing, if not always the most sagacious! of animals.

In my last lecture, I noted to you, though

only parenthetically, the singular defect in Greek art, that it never gives you any conception of Greek children. Neither—up to the thirteenth century—does Gothic art give you any conception of Gothic children; for, until the thirteenth century, the Goth was not perfectly Christianized, and still thought only of the strength of humanity as admirable in battle or venerable in judgment, but not as dutiful in peace, nor happy in simplicity.

But from the moment when the spirit of Christianity had been entirely interpreted to the Western races, the sanctity of womanhood worshipped in the Madonna, and the sanctity of childhood in unity with that of Christ, became the light of every honest hearth, and the joy of every pure and chastened soul. Yet the traditions of art-subject, and the vices of luxury which developed themselves in the following (fourteenth) century, prevented the manifestation of this new force in domestic life for two centuries more; and then at last in the child angels of Luca, Mino of Fesole,

Luini, Angelico, Perugino, and the first days of Raphael, it expressed itself as the one pure and sacred passion which protected Christendom from the ruin of the Renaissance.

Nor has it since failed; and whatever disgrace or blame obscured the conception of the later Flemish and incipient English schools, the children, whether in the pictures of Rubens, Rembrandt, Vandyke, or Sir Joshua, were always beautiful. An extremely dark period indeed follows, leading to and persisting in the French Revolution, and issuing in the merciless manufacturing fury, which to-day grinds children to dust between millstones, and tears them to pieces on engine-wheels, —against which rises round us, Heaven be thanked, again the protest and the power of Christianity, restoring the fields of the quiet earth to the steps of her infancy.

In Germany, this protest, I believe, began with—it is at all events perfectly represented by—the Ludwig Richter I have so often named; in France, with Edward Frère, whose pictures

of children are of quite immortal beauty. But in England it was long repressed by the terrible action of our wealth, compelling our painters to represent the children of the poor as in wickedness or misery. It is one of the most terrific facts in all the history of British art that Bewick never draws children but in mischief.

I am not able to say with whom, in Britain, the reaction first begins,—but certainly not in painting until after Wilkie, in all whose works there is not a single example of a beautiful Scottish boy or girl. I imagine in literature, we may take the ‘Cottar’s Saturday Night’ and the ‘toddlin’ wee things’ as the real beginning of child benediction; and I am disposed to assign in England much value to the widely felt, though little acknowledged, influence of an authoress now forgotten—Mary Russell Mitford. Her village children in the Lowlands—in the Highlands, the Lucy Grays and Alice Fells of Wordsworth—brought back to us the hues of Fairy Land; and although

long by Academic art denied or resisted, at last the charm is felt in London itself,—on pilgrimage in whose suburbs you find the Little Nells and boy David Copperfields; and in the heart of it, Kit's baby brother at Astley's, indenting his cheek with an oyster-shell to the admiration of all beholders; till at last, bursting out like one of the sweet Surrey fountains, all dazzling and pure, you have the radiance and innocence of reinstated infant divinity showered again among the flowers of English meadows by Mrs. Allingham and Kate Greenaway.

It has chanced strangely, that every one of the artists to whom in these lectures I wished chiefly to direct your thoughts, has been insufficiently, or even disadvantageously, represented by his work in the exhibitions of the season. But chiefly I have been disappointed in finding no drawing of the least interest by Mrs. Allingham in the room of the Old Water-colour Society. And let me say in passing, that none of these new splendours

and spaces of show galleries, with attached restaurants to support the cockney constitution under the trial of getting from one end of them to the other, will in the least make up to the real art-loving public for the loss of the good fellowship of our old societies, every member of which sent everything he had done best in the year into the room, for the May meetings; shone with his debited measure of admiration in his accustomed corner; supported his associates without eclipsing them; supplied his customers without impoverishing them; and was permitted to sell a picture to his patron or his friend, without paying fifty guineas commission on the business to a dealer.

Howsoever it may have chanced, Mrs. Allingham has nothing of importance in the water-colour room; and I am even sorrowfully compelled to express my regret that she should have spent unavailing pains in finishing single heads, which are at the best uninteresting miniatures, instead of fulfilling her true gift,

and doing what (in Miss Alexander's words) 'the Lord made her for'—in representing the gesture, character, and humour of charming children in country landscapes. Her 'Tea Party,' in last year's exhibition, with the little girl giving her doll its bread and milk, and taking care that she supped it with propriety, may be named as a most lovely example of her feeling and her art; and the drawing which some years ago riveted, and ever since has retained, the public admiration,—the two deliberate housewives in their village toyshop, bent on domestic utilities and economies, and proud in the acquisition of two flat irons for a farthing,—has become, and rightly, a classic picture, which will have its place among the memorable things in the art of our time, when many of its loudly trumpeted magnificences are remembered no more.

I must not in this place omit mention, with sincere gratitude, of the like motives in the paintings of Mr. Birkett Foster; but with regret that in too equal, yet incomplete,

realization of them, mistaking, in many instances, mere spotty execution for finish, he has never taken the high position that was open to him as an illustrator of rustic life.

And I am grieved to omit the names of many other artists who have protested, with consistent feeling, against the misery entailed on the poor children of our great cities,—by painting the real inheritance of childhood in the meadows and fresh air. But the graciousness and sentiment of them all is enough represented by the hitherto undreamt-of, and, in its range, unrivalled, fancy, which is now re-establishing throughout gentle Europe, the manners and customs of fairyland.

I may best indicate to you the grasp which the genius of Miss Kate Greenaway has taken upon the spirit of foreign lands, no less than her own, by translating the last paragraph of the entirely candid, and intimately observant, review of modern English art, given by Monsieur Ernest Chesneau, in his small volume, ‘*La Peinture Anglaise,*’ of

which I will only at present say, that any of my pupils who read French with practice enough to recognize the finesse of it in exact expression, may not only accept his criticism as my own, but will find it often more careful than mine, and nearly always better expressed; because French is essentially a critical language, and can say things in a sentence which it would take half a page of English to explain.

He gives first a quite lovely passage (too long to introduce now) upon the gentleness of the satire of John Leech, as opposed to the bitter malignity of former caricature. Then he goes on: "The great softening of the English mind, so manifest already in John Leech, shows itself in a decisive manner by the enthusiasm with which the public have lately received the designs of Mr. Walter Crane, Mr. Caldecott, and Miss Kate Greenaway. The two first named artists began by addressing to children the stories of Perrault and of the Arabian Nights, translated and adorned for them in a dazzling manner; and, in the

works of all these three artists, landscape plays an important part;—familiar landscape, very English, interpreted with a ‘*bonhomie savante*’ (no translating that), “spiritual, decorative in the rarest taste,—strange and precious adaptation of Etruscan art, Flemish and Japanese, reaching, together with the perfect interpretation of nature, to incomparable chords of colour harmony. These powers are found in the work of the three, but Miss Greenaway, with a profound sentiment of love for children, puts the child alone on the scene, companions him in his own solitudes, and shows the infantine nature in all its naiveté, its gaucherie, its touching grace, its shy alarm, its discoveries, ravishments, embarrassments, and victories; the stumblings of it in wintry ways, the enchanted smiles of its spring time, and all the history of its fond heart and guiltless egoism.

“From the honest but fierce laugh of the coarse Saxon, William Hogarth, to the delicious smile of Kate Greenaway, there has past a century and a half. Is it the same people

which applauds to-day the sweet genius and tender malices of the one, and which applauded the bitter genius and slaughterous satire of the other? After all, that is possible,—the hatred of vice is only another manifestation of the love of innocence.”

Thus far M. Chesneau—and I venture only to take up the admirable passage at a question I did not translate: “*Ira-t-on au dela, fera-t-on mieux encore?*”—and to answer joyfully, Yes, if you choose; you, the British public, to encourage the artist in doing the best she can for you. She will, if you will receive it when she does.

I have brought with me to-day in the first place some examples of her pencil sketches in primary design. These in general the public cannot see, and these, as is always the case with the finest imaginative work, contain the best essence of it,—qualities never afterwards to be recovered, and expressed with the best of all sensitive instruments, the pencil point.

IV. Mrs. Allingham and K. Greenaway. 147

You have here, for consummate example, a dance of fairies under a mushroom, which she did under challenge to show me what fairies were like. "They'll be very like children," she said; I answered that I didn't mind, and should like to see them, all the same;—so here they are, with a dance, also, of two girlies, outside of a mushroom; and I don't know whether the elfins or girls are fairyfootedest: and one or two more subjects, which you may find out;—but, in all, you will see that the line is ineffably tender and delicate, and can't in the least be represented by the lines of a woodcut. But I have long since shown you the power of line engraving as it was first used in Florence; and if you choose, you may far recover the declining energies of line engraving in England, by encouraging its use in the multiplication, whether of these, or of Turner outlines, or of old Florentine silver point outlines, no otherwise to be possessed by you. I have given you one example of what is possible

in Mr. Rolfe's engraving of Ida; and, if all goes well, before the autumn fairy rings are traced, you shall see some fairy Idas caught flying.

So far of pure outline. Next, for the enrichment of it by colour. Monsieur Chesneau doubts if the charm of Miss Greenaway's work can be carried farther. I answer, with security,—yes, very much farther, and that in two directions: first, in her own method of design; and secondly, the manner of its representation in printing.

First, her own design has been greatly restricted by being too ornamental, or, in your modern phrase, decorative;—contracted into any corner of a Christmas card, or stretched like an elastic band round the edges of an almanack. Now, her art is much too good to be used merely for illumination; it is essentially and perfectly that of true colour-picture, and that the most naive and delightful manner of picture, because, on the simplest terms, it comes nearest reality.

No end of mischief has been done to modern art by the habit of running semi-pictorial illustration round the margins of ornamental volumes, and Miss Greenaway has been wasting her strength too sorrowfully in making the edges of her little birthday books, and the like, glitter with unregarded gold, whereas her power should be concentrated in the direct illustration of connected story, and her pictures should be made complete on the page, and far more realistic than decorative. There is no charm so enduring as that of the real representation of any given scene; her present designs are like living flowers flattened to go into an herbarium, and sometimes too pretty to be believed. We must ask her for more descriptive reality, for more convincing simplicity, and we must get her to organize a school of colourists by hand, who can absolutely facsimile her own first drawing.

This is the second matter on which I have to insist. I bring with me to-day twelve of her original drawings, and have mounted

beside them, good impressions of the published prints.

I may heartily congratulate both the publishers and possessors of the book on the excellence of these; yet if you examine them closely, you will find that the colour blocks of the print sometimes slip a little aside, so as to lose the precision of the drawing in important places; and in many other respects better can be done, in at least a certain number of chosen copies. I must not, however, detain you to-day by entering into particulars in this matter. I am content to ask your sympathy in the endeavour, if I can prevail on the artist to undertake it.

Only with respect to this and every other question of method in engraving, observe farther that *all* the drawings I bring you to-day agree in one thing,—minuteness and delicacy of touch carried to its utmost limit, visible in its perfectness to the eyes of youth, but neither executed with a magnifying glass, nor, except to aged eyes, needing one. Even

I, at sixty-four, can see the essential qualities of the work without spectacles; though only the youngest of my friends here can see, for instance, Kate's fairy dance, perfectly, but *they* can, with their own bright eyes.

And now please note this, for an entirely general law, again and again reiterated by me for many a year. *All great art is delicate*, and fine to the uttermost. Wherever there is blotting, or daubing, or dashing, there is weakness, at least; probably, affectation; certainly, bluntness of feeling. But, all delicacy which is rightly pleasing to the human mind is addressed to the *unaided human sight*, not to microscopic help or mediation.

And now generalize that law farther. As all noble sight is with the eyes that God has given you, so all noble motion is with the limbs God has balanced for you, and all noble strength with the arms He has knit. Though you should put electric coils into your high heels, and make spring-heeled Jacks and Gills of yourselves, you will never

dance, so, as you could barefoot. Though you could have machines that would swing a ship of war into the sea, and drive a railway train through a rock, all divine strength is still the strength of Herakles, a man's wrestle, and a man's blow.

There are two other points I must try to enforce in closing, very clearly. "Landscape," says M. Chesneau, "takes great part in these lovely designs." He does not say of what kind; may I ask you to look, for yourselves, and think?

There are no railroads in it, to carry the children away with, are there? no tunnel or pit mouths to swallow them up, no league-long viaducts — no blinkered iron bridges? There are only winding brooks, wooden foot-bridges, and grassy hills without any holes cut into them!

Again, — there are no parks, no gentlemen's seats with attached stables and offices! — no rows of model lodging houses! no charitable institutions!! It seems as if none

of these things which the English mind now rages after, possess any attraction whatever for this unimpressionable person. She is a graceful Gallio—*Gallia gratia plena*, and cares for none of those things.

And more wonderful still,—there are no gasworks! no waterworks, no mowing machines, no sewing machines, no telegraph poles, no vestige, in fact, of science, civilization, economical arrangements, or commercial enterprise!!!

Would you wish me, with professorial authority, to advise her that her conceptions belong to the dark ages, and must be reared on a new foundation? Or is it, on the other hand, recommendably conceivable by *you*, that perhaps the world we truly live in may not be quite so changeable as you have thought it;—that all the gold and silver you can dig out of the earth are not worth the kingcups and the daisies she gave you of her grace; and that all the fury, and the flutter, and the wonder, and the wistfulness, of your lives,

will never discover for you any other than the ancient blessing: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters, He restoreth my soul"?

Yet one word more. Observe that what this unimpressionable person *does* draw, she draws as like it as she can. It is true that the combination or composition of things is not what you can see every day. You can't every day, for instance, see a baby thrown into a basket of roses; but when she has once pleasantly invented that arrangement for you, baby is as like baby, and rose as like rose, as she can possibly draw them. And the beauty of them is in *being* like. They are blissful, just in the degree that they are natural; and the fairyland she creates for you is not beyond the sky nor beneath the sea, but nigh you, even at your doors. She does but show you how to see it, and how to cherish.

Long since I told you this great law of noble imagination. It does not create, it

does not even adorn, it does but *reveal*, the treasures to be possessed by the spirit. I told you this of the work of the great painter whom, in that day, everyone accused of representing only the fantastic and the impossible. I said forty years ago, and say at this instant, more solemnly, All his magic is in his truth.

I show you, to-day, a beautiful copy made for me by Mr. Macdonald, of the drawing which, of all the Turners I gave you, I miss the most. I never thought it could have been copied at all, and have received from Mr. Macdonald, in this lovely rendering of it, as much a lesson as a consolation. For my purpose to-day it is just as good as if I had brought the drawing itself.

It is one of the Loire series, which the engravers could not attempt, because it was too lovely; or would not attempt, because there was, to their notion, nothing in it. It is only a coteau, scarce a hundred feet above

the river, nothing like so high as the Thames banks between here and Reading,—only a coteau, and a recess of calm water, and a breath of mist, and a ray of sunset. The simplest things, the frequentest, the dearest; things that you may see any summer evening by a thousand thousand streams among the low hills of old familiar lands. Love them, and see them rightly,—Andes and Caucasus, Amazon and Indus, can give you no more.

The danger imminent on you is the destruction of what you *have*. I walked yesterday afternoon round St. John's gardens, and found them, as they always are in spring time, almost an ideal of earthly Paradise,—the St. John's students also disporting themselves therein in games preparatory to the advent of the true fairies of Commemoration. But, the afternoon before, I had walked down St. John's *Road*, and, on emerging therefrom to cross the railway, found on my left hand a piece of waste ground, extremely characteristic of that with which we now always adorn the suburbs

of our cities, and of which it can only be said that no demons could contrive, under the earth, a more uncomfortable and abominable place of misery for the condemned souls of dirty people, than Oxford thus allows the western light to shine upon—‘*nel aer dolce, che dal sol s’allegra.*’ For many a year I have now been telling you, and in the final words of this first course of lectures in which I have been permitted again to resume work among you, let me tell you yet once more, and if possible, more vehemently, that neither sound art, policy, nor religion, can exist in England, until, neglecting, if it must be, your own pleasure gardens and pleasure chambers, you resolve that the streets which are the habitation of the poor, and the fields which are the playgrounds of their children, shall be again restored to the rule of the spirits, whosoever they are in earth, and heaven, that ordain, and reward, with constant and conscious felicity, all that is decent and orderly, beautiful and pure.

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